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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development**

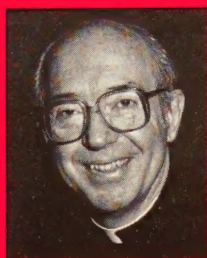
Farewell to Pedro Arrupe

The Essentials of Well-Being

From Codependency to Contemplation

Leadership During Transformation

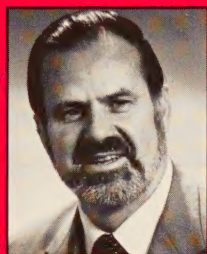
Rejecting Family Roles



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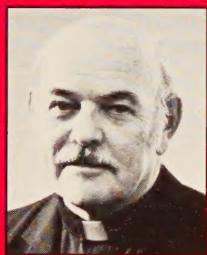
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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide names of author(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Illustrations, if any, should be submitted as high-quality, glossy, unmounted black and white photographic prints. Do not send original artwork.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

WORLD LOSES EXTRAORDINARY LEADER

Not long after the last time I sat down to write the Editor's Page, we Jesuits and countless other religious people throughout the world experienced the loss of one of the outstanding spiritual leaders of our era, Father Pedro Arrupe, former superior general of the Society of Jesus. Our feelings have been mixed since we first heard the announcement of his death. We have been sad because a warmhearted, excitingly creative, and holy friend has been called away from us. We have been rejoicing because a decade of crippling, post-stroke illness has been brought to an end, and Pedro Arrupe can now, face-to-face, behold the Lord whom he has loved so ardently and served so enthusiastically in times of achievement and of suffering throughout his life.

As a post-Vatican II superior general, Father Arrupe was destined to deal with monumental issues within the church and the Jesuit order, against a backdrop of worldwide turbulence. He had to cope with polarization within the Society of Jesus in relation to theological positions, ministerial preferences, and community as well as individual life-styles. The wider world in which he so effectively exercised his leadership (as general from 1965 to 1983) challenged him with a daunting battleground of increasing secularism, materialism, consumerism, poverty, and refugees by the millions fleeing political and military strife. Father Arrupe regretfully watched tens of thousands of priests and religious, including Jesuits, withdraw from active ministry despite worldwide evidence of the church's need for their services. He struggled

against tough resistance within the order and the church when he set out to implement the principles of renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Council. Finally, he suffered immeasurable emotional pain when the Vatican misunderstood his boldly innovative efforts to accomplish what he thought the Council and the Holy Spirit were saying must be done. His stroke and his subsequent infirmity bore pathetic testimony to the intensity of the grief he felt over Rome's misinterpretation of his policies and motivations.

Yet in spite of all the formidable tasks Father Arrupe faced, everyone who knew him at all well found him steadily joyful, peaceful, kind, profound, optimistic, and above all, saintly. I personally remember him most affectionately when I think about three memorable scenes I will treasure until the day I die. The first was the morning he began with liturgy his meeting with a group of new Jesuit provincial superiors whom he had called to Frascati, near Rome. Sounding like a football coach firing up his players just before a game, Father Arrupe exhorted his men to put their entire hearts and souls into the mass they were about to celebrate with him, "as if this were going to be the last mass you would ever offer in your life." His give-it-all-you've-got attitude, I came to recognize, was manifested in all the great as well as small activities that made up his life.

The second scene took place in Goa, India, where Father Arrupe was delivering a homily to another group of Jesuit superiors. Standing next to the altar on which the miraculously preserved body of St. Francis Xavier had been placed for the occasion, he looked directly at the saint's face and talked to Xavier as if the famous missionary were alive. He pleaded with "our brother Francis" to "ask God to give all of us Jesuits the same kind of zeal, and hope, and enthusiasm for ministry that you yourself displayed." I suspect that in his secret prayers,

too, Father Arrupe was accustomed to addressing Jesus, God, and his other favorite saints in the same intimate, confident, and spontaneous way in which he talked to Xavier that day.

The third revealing episode occurred early one evening at a conference center in Italy, when a few Irish Jesuits were about to leave their residence and go to see a popular film. They invited Father Arrupe to join them, but he smilingly declined. A few minutes later I heard him confess, "If I had gone with them I wouldn't have watched the movie for twenty minutes without being totally distracted by the letters on my desk, sent by Jesuits all over the world. These men have good ideas, many suggestions, urgent needs, and some have serious problems. I want to write back as quickly as I can. My role is to serve them." And that was how Father Pedro Arrupe lived his life—constantly serving others, always available, completely unselfish, and filled with compassion for persons in need.

The same kind and generous man who had earlier spent all of his energy month after month in Japan, taking medical and spiritual care of victims of the Hiroshima nuclear bombing, took the time in 1980 to send a personal letter of encouragement to us when we were printing our inaugural issue of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. He wrote, "I wish you and your associates great success in achieving the goals

of your new journal. . . . Your efforts and the dedication of the men and women working with you will provide a most valuable service to those who are guiding and supporting the religious development of countless persons, young and old, all over the world. . . . I commend myself to your Masses and prayers."

By such priceless gestures, Father Arrupe endeared himself to the hearts of Jesuits and thousands of other friends all over the world. Our lives have been enriched and transformed through his grace-laden influence. The "Masses and prayers" he requested are still being offered by us for this incomparable leader, father, and friend. But, to be honest, our intention in saying them has taken on a slightly different spin. We offer them now to thank the Lord for sending Pedro Arrupe to us all, at this moment in the history of the church, of the Jesuits, and of the world, when God knew we all would need this extraordinary man's example, guidance, and loving care so desperately.



James J. Gill, S. J., M. D.
Editor-in-Chief

Study Links Feelings to Mortality

Physicians should pay careful attention to the way their patients evaluate their own health. A recent study of more than 2,800 men and women 65 years old and older has shown that people's reply to the question "Is your health excellent, good, fair, or poor?" is a better predictor of who will live or die during the next decade than even a thorough physical examination. The research, conducted by sociologist Dr. Ellen Idler at Rutgers University, revealed that older people who consider their health to be "poor" are seven times more likely to die within twelve years than those who describe their health as "excellent." Similar findings have been reported in other studies of people of all ages.

Dr. Idler observes that "people's own judgments about their health are surprisingly accurate predictors of their survival." Her view is supported by Duke University psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Blazer, who states, "We've all seen times when patients prove to have a better sense of what's happening with their health than you can determine by objective measures." He adds, however, that "if you're not worried about your health, it does not necessarily mean that nothing is wrong."

The Rutgers research, reported by health writer Daniel Goleman in the *New York Times*, found that

virtually no results from a comprehensive physical examination were related to how long a person lived over the next dozen years. Circulatory disorders such as hypertension provided the only notable exception. "These were excellent, in-depth physicals with extensive lab tests," remarked Dr. Idler. "We were astonished to find that physician's exams didn't predict mortality." She and other researchers have been unable to explain why people's own evaluations are better predictors of long-term health than are physical examinations and tests.

One attempt to explain the research findings was made by Rutgers psychologist Dr. Howard Leventhal. He notes, "A general sense of tiredness, without any reason, sends a signal to people. It may reflect an underlying disease, or a vulnerability to disease." In a study of 340 adults, he found that as people became depressed, they were more likely to say they were in worse physical health. "My hunch," he states, "is that both reports of depression and poor health are a reflection of people's energy levels. If people are exhausted and you asked them about their mood, they'll say they're depressed. And if you ask them about their health, they'll say it's poor."

A Letter to the General

In Memoriam, Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

I.

Pedro, far friend,
You are relieved of office beyond "Call Forward."
No more squinting through mailbags, happy you.

I mark this letter *Soli* for old times,
trusting you know of it before its going public.

You couldn't laugh on paper as in a corridor.
I wasn't free with the second person singular.

A letter *Soli* could shift one's Mississippi.
Mine turned me adult as gunfire turns the hair.

You played my leading strings, "O.K.,
next step!"
I stepped into thin air, "Geronimo!"

II.

Under the skin of the city, Pedro, I'm now
propelled
in a compartment whose doors shoot open and
clamp shut.

I sit tight in here among all ages, faces,
reading the signs like you told us to, the hotlines.

"Pregnant?" "Need Cash?" "Crime Victim?"
"Tired of the High Life?"
Plus "Adult Phone Fantasy," "Soap Opera Update."

The city kid is to drink this in like a fish—
like the dead-end puffer of *Camels, un tipo suave?*

No, Pedro, don't smile, it's serious.
Is this what I'm collared here to get by heart?

Riders don't give them a second look, I grant you,
Wearing their own look of the world news, Asia to
San Juan,

Or, over light skin, jackets with emblem bursts,
Or cornrowed hair, shaved mesas of hair.

Glints, are they then, if smudgy, of You Know Who,
Personae from the book I see solitaires devour?

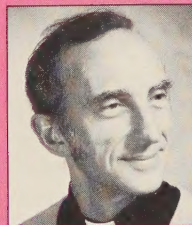
My eyes lift. "Give Someone a Winter Coat." Good
sign.
"H.I.V. Positive and Alive Still." Better.

III.

At noon a bus drops me near a dull building, barred.
Spirals of razor wire line the top of its fences.

Out of the blue, Pedro, a chapel rings "Angelus."
The bottled-up are crying to be heard. I get you.

—James Torrens, S.J.



James Torrens, S.J., is an associate editor
of *America*.

Hail and Farewell, Don Pedro

George Aschenbrenner, S.J.

Finally, on February 5, around 7:45 in the evening, Father Pedro Arrupe died. He had been the twenty-eighth general superior of the Society of Jesus. After almost ten years of patient waiting and suffering, his final agony had stretched far beyond most people's expectations. For over ten days after his condition had become critical, moments of labored breathing and gurgling in the throat signaled a growing congestion in Arrupe's lungs. Death seemed more and more imminent. And yet, somehow, that comatose, frail body survived these crises and kept breathing. What a great, strong heart he had.

During his final days, while all the daily work of the Jesuit Generalate continued, everything was focused on that frail body in the infirmary, breathing sometimes laboriously, sometimes quietly. Jesuits, especially coworkers on his staff, were gathering from all over the world. Father Vincent O'Keefe, who had shared so many joys and sufferings over the many years as one of Arrupe's personal councillors, arrived from New York to keep vigil with his dear friend. Some of the Jesuit coworkers who had rushed to Arrupe's bedside had to change their return plans as the vigil lengthened. The big Jesuit Gesu Church in Rome was already reserved for a ten o'clock funeral liturgy whenever his death would occur. And Father Kolvenbach, the present general superior, was gathering thoughts for a funeral eulogy in the midst of all his other

work. This was the first time in the Society's history that the succeeding general was elected before his predecessor's death. And Kolvenbach had decided to preserve the long tradition of the Dominican general superior's presiding at the funeral liturgy of a Jesuit general.

Arrupe's simple little infirmary room had become like a sanctuary in those final days. On Friday, January 25, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick was administered. The following Sunday, notification that Arrupe was probably dying and request for the papal blessing were sent to the Vatican. That same evening, as soon as he returned from his visit to a Roman parish, Pope John Paul personally came to the Curia and joined those community members then praying in Don Pedro's bedroom.

Many times when I stopped in that little room, Jesuits of the Curia and from around Rome came and went. Some sat for a while; others just briefly stood by the bed; but all prayed for that little man in the bed, knowing that they were blessed just to be in his presence. The Thursday morning before he died, as I turned the corner and entered his room for a brief visit, I was touched to find Father Vincent O'Keefe sitting in vigil by the bed. We spoke briefly in a whisper, as one does in a sanctuary, and I thanked him for coming. It was so right that he be there. Later that morning, on a Roman street near the Curia, I met a young American

Jesuit priest who is studying in Rome. As we embraced in greeting, he was in tears. He told me he had come over to the Generalate for a brief visit with Arrupe. He had been so deeply moved by O'Keefe's generous and warm welcome at the bedside that he had stayed for a whole hour. But that is what happens in a sanctuary: we are held in love and admiration longer than we expect.

Once the death occurred on Tuesday evening, pending details were finalized. The funeral would be on Saturday at 10 o'clock in the Gesu, and the body would be waked in the ground-floor chapel of the Curia until Friday evening. After having supper at the Curia on Wednesday, I went to this chapel to pray for Arrupe. As I entered, I realized I was all alone, kneeling in the dimly lit stillness. What a precious time. The way the head was propped up gave the body a dignity, even an elegance, in the utter simplicity of the scene: the wooden casket, a couple of bouquets of flowers, and the cross standing guard like a beacon of light. My heart filled with memories. In April 1970, at a meeting of English-speaking novice directors in that same building, Arrupe's enthusiasm, hope, and great zeal had welcomed, renewed, and challenged us all. In July 1972, during his four-day visit with the worldwide Jesuit participants in a special colloquium in Hong Kong on cultural liberation and the formation of Jesuit community, Arrupe's easy presence among us and his inextinguishable vision fired our hearts. And then he left us renewed and grateful as we stood at the door of the Maryknoll House, where we were living, filled with admiration for this wiry little man with one small bag in his hand as he followed Jesus Christ, his companion and his All. And then in August 1976, at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, the smile on his face as he greeted me by name at the reception after mass, as well as the inspiration he was for our novices, stand clear in my memory. Finally, I got up and stepped to the casket to look into his face, and as I raised my hand in blessing, I was sure that it was really he who was blessing me.

For the next two days that little chapel was constantly filled with people coming to pay their last respects. Many, many women religious, men from other religious congregations, cardinals, bishops, Jesuits, seminarians, political leaders (the president and prime minister of Italy), and hundreds of lay people from Rome and way beyond could be seen kneeling in quiet prayer, still somehow drawn by the powerful spirit that had once inspired that frail little body with the great, strong heart. On Thursday at noon in the Jesuit community chapel on the third floor, O'Keefe presided at the community's funeral liturgy for their beloved brother. And that same evening at six o'clock, Kolvenbach presided at a prayer service in the chapel downstairs, which was jammed to overflowing.

Everyone, as they left that chapel or as they

arrived at the Gesu for the funeral, received a beautiful memorial card. With a certain majesty, gravity, and vision, the card's portrait of Arrupe catches the Basque profile, with eye gazing far-sightedly ahead, cheek and chin determined yet moving toward the dimple of a smile. On the back of the card, after the ordinary biographical details, the childlike faith and paschal mysteriousness of this man's whole life, and especially of his last years of waiting and suffering, leap out in a quote from his last speech. That speech, which had to be teased out of the almost-mute Arrupe by his personal councilors after his stroke, had been read by one of them to the 33rd General Congregation while the author sat by, silent but ever so attentive. It states, for all to know, his clear awareness of what was happening and his attitude of eager will in loving acceptance.

More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands.

Many people have mentioned to me how struck they are by that quote. It states so clearly and concretely the profound mystery involved in the agonizing waiting and patient hoping of Arrupe's last years, not only for Arrupe himself but also for so many other people. These words ring with his irrepressible faith and dogged hope, and they call all of us to daily lives in witness to the promised fullness of God's love, revealed in the patient mystery of Jesus' suffering death into resurrection.

Saturday, February 9th, dawned gray and rainy. As I started to walk to the Gesu, the rain had stopped, and downtown Rome was slowly coming alive, though many stores were not yet open. As I got closer to the church, I saw people walking from all different directions, aimed unmistakably at the little piazza in front of the Gesu. Although I entered the church a good hour before the mass, it was clear that there were only a few seats empty here and there. People would soon begin standing, leaning against walls, and nestling in corners on the floor until the church was jammed full. After almost ten years of obscurity in his little infirmary room, it was immediately obvious that Pedro Arrupe had not been forgotten. His brother Jesuits, countless women religious, and many other people from Rome, other parts of Europe, and indeed from all over the world were present to celebrate the triumph of his passing.

We often speak of death as the great equalizer: it comes for us all. And it had come for Arrupe; his body lay in our midst. But death is also the moment when the significance of a person's whole life is concentrated before the brilliant flash of God's incandescent light. Though the flash of light is

perceptibly less brilliant in front of us, the greatness of a person's whole life often stands concentrated in the celebration of death. No wonder so many of the people crowded into that great church found that the little frail body in the casket seemed to have an immense presence.

Sitting near the front of the church, I was struck by the quietness of the big crowd of 400 concelebrants as they gathered and patiently waited. The mood was subdued and prayerful. Over twenty cardinals and bishops, together with political leaders of both the city and the nation and other special guests, were quietly escorted to reserved sections in the front of the church, flanking the casket. Proudly and very appropriately seated in their midst was Brother Rafael Bandera, the infirmarian who had cared for Arrupe over all those years.

The brief, simple procession began punctually at ten o'clock. The master general of the Dominicans, Father Damian Byrne, flanked by Kolvenbach, O'Keefe, and four other Jesuits, led us into the celebration. It seemed as though the presider did not need to welcome us. The giant spirit of the man whose closed casket now lay before us had already welcomed and introduced us all to one another. After the gospel, Kolvenbach stepped forward and in his homily beautifully replayed the Magnificat of his predecessor's whole life, with its three clear, strong loves: that of Jesus Christ, that of the church, and that of the Society of Jesus.

After the mass and before the final blessing of the body, the titular bishop of the Gesu, Eduardo Cardinal Martinez-Somalo, prefect of the Congregation for the Sacraments and designated papal representative for the occasion, read final, warm, and personal words from Pope John Paul. As part of the final blessing, the congregation sang its prayerful tribute: "May the Angels Lead You into Paradise." Then six young Jesuits from different parts of the world stepped forward and put the casket on their shoulders, and the procession began slowly to move. A cross and two tall, thin candles preceded the simple wooden casket, now glistening in the lights of the church, as it slowly wended its way head-high through the center of that enormous, respectful crowd. All of a sudden, in an unexpected yet irresistible way, waves of quiet reverent applause rolled through the church. The applause,

cresting and fading, seemed to accompany the casket ever so gently and respectfully on its journey down that long central aisle. My heart knew that everyone, including myself, was saying thank you and goodbye. My throat tightened, and the tears were strong behind my eyes.

On tiptoe, I looked back to follow the casket, still head-high, moving slowly through the crowd. I was astonished to see the huge central doors of the Gesu wide open and the sun streaming in brightly. Accompanied by the grateful applause all along the aisle, the casket disappeared through those doors and into that bright sunlight. "May light everlasting shine upon him." The experience is indelibly imprinted on my memory.

A sister friend who was outside the church told me that as the quiet, reverent applause bid a final farewell, the hearse drove away and was quickly lost in the Roman traffic. When I came out, people were dispersing in all directions. But we would never be the same again. The whole experience of the death and funeral had strengthened our faith and was now propelling us forth with renewed awe, joy, and exuberant gratitude that just had to abandon all in loving service of the greater glory of God. There was not much sadness. The exuberant, purified, faithful spirit of Don Pedro had once again worked its contagious magic. As I walked down the main street, the shops were open and traffic was lively, but I didn't really notice. I could still see everlasting light shining on a brother Jesuit who would always live for me as inspiration and fondest blessing. And from the memory of a brief study of Roman poetry many years ago, Catullus rang for me: Hail, my dear brother, and thank you. Hail, and farewell.



Father George Aschenbrenner, S.J., is director of the spiritual formation program at the North American College in Rome, Italy. He was formerly novice director for the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus and then worked in pastoral ministry to faculty and staff at Scranton University and St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

From Codependency to Contemplation

Wilkie Au, S.J., Ph.D., and Noreen Cannon, C.S.J., Ph.D.

Codependency is fast becoming a household word. Specialists writing about codependency estimate that 96 percent of the American population is codependent to one degree or another, albeit unwittingly, because this condition, they say, is built into the fabric of our social institutions. This means that as a culture, we have been raised to be codependent. Family, church, school, workplace—all encourage and support codependent behavior. Originally, the word *codependent* referred to a person so closely involved with an alcoholic or drug addict that he or she was affected by the addict's behavior. Today codependency has a broader meaning and is popularly used to describe categories of behavior that are either controlling of others or compliant toward others. The term also implies certain personality characteristics, such as low self-esteem, lack of personal boundaries (inability to say no), poor intimacy skills, and compulsive activity, usually in the form of "helping" others. What is surprising about the condition of codependency is how much it affects all of us.

Mental health professionals have identified codependency as the number one mental health issue of the nineties. Most of the literature currently available addresses codependency from the mental health point of view, focusing on techniques and programs for recovery. However, it is important for persons who desire to grow in a deeper, more authentic spiritual life to also look at codepen-

dency from the perspective of Christian spirituality. In his article "The Gospel of Therapy," Protestant theologian Richard Neuhaus alludes to this need when he states that "codependency thinking shares the modern infatuation with technique. Most self-help books . . . suggest that it is a suitable goal to strive to become a *technician* [his emphasis] of the inner life." What we suggest in this article is that Christians have within their own tradition rich resources that can bring God's healing into their lives and free them from the bondage that codependency inflicts on them. The condition of codependency is one of being in captivity, of being stuck with self-defeating learned behaviors or character defects that result in addictions, depression, troubled relationships, and chronic dissatisfaction. In suggesting that contemplation can provide a key to freedom and healing, we are relying on our experience with codependency—both our own and that of others shared with us in our practice of spiritual direction and psychotherapy.

CONTEMPLATION AND LIBERATION

Because the term *contemplation* is variously understood within different spiritual traditions, it would be helpful at the outset to define our use of the term. Here we are not using the term in the Carmelite (e.g., St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross) sense of contemplation as a passive, infused way of

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praying. In our definition, contemplation includes two types of activity. Both emphasize the value of employing the imagination to more deeply internalize the Good News of God's unconditional love and Christ's enabling presence as a source of personal healing. First, contemplation means taking time off and away for solitude, which is a free and friendly space to be with oneself and to enjoy a perspective provided by prayer that allows one to be more attentive to the movements of God's grace in one's life. Second, as St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches, contemplation is the form of prayer by which we actively use our imagination to help us see the constructive choices and actions that grace invites us to take in response to the perplexing challenges of our life situation, as well as to sense the abiding presence of God with us as we take responsibility as Christians for shaping our lives more and more in the pattern of Jesus' life.

This strategy for freedom, based on Christian spirituality, relies on the power of reimagining and a contemplative stance in life, which helps codependents learn how to transcend inhibiting self-images and to acquire liberating ways of viewing their lives. Escape from bondage begins with the capacity to imagine that things can be other than they are. Things do not have to stay the same. Contemplation nurtures solitude and creativity, which in turn can give birth to liberating alternatives to debilitating addictions. Suffering in itself will not deliver people from their desperate plight. Only the realization that things can be other than they are will make the suffering bearable. And only when people see that there are other possibilities for

being and acting and that their present suffering is unnecessary will the empowering forces for deliverance be unleashed. By correlating some of the characteristics of codependence with some of the fruits of contemplation, we hope to describe a way of moving from bondage to freedom.

THE NATURE OF CODEPENDENCY

Anne Wilson Schaef, an authority in the field of codependency, believes that the majority of people in our society today are codependent—that is, dependent on others for their sense of identity and value. In her best-selling book *When Society Becomes an Addict*, she also suggests that the condition of codependency is so built into the fabric of our institutions that we perceive as normal and acceptable that which is unhealthy and dysfunctional. In fact, the popular image of the “good” Christian as one who always thinks of others first, who always puts the needs of others ahead of his or her own, who always says yes, is a graphic portrayal of a codependent in action.

Compulsive Giving. Codependents tend to be self-sacrificing, generous, other-directed, and idealistic people. Since these are also characteristics of genuine self-transcendence, codependency is often confused with holiness. What distinguishes codependence from authentic Christian behavior is the compulsive quality of the codependent's relationships with others. For the codependent, giving is a must rather than a response of genuine compassion. Codependents do not give freely; they give because they “should.” The giving of the codependent is often more a flight from self than the dying to self that characterizes true Christian service. Suffering from low self-esteem and feelings of being unlovable, codependents strive to overcome these painful feelings by proving to others that they are good and therefore worthy of love. In a culture that equates doing good with being good, codependents easily become addicted to helping others, thereby justifying themselves by good works.

Poor Self-Image. To codependents, it is of the utmost importance that others think well of them, because it is to others that the codependent looks for a sense of identity and self-esteem. Lacking a positive connection to their true selves, codependents cannot turn inward to this vital source of identity and security, and so become dependent on the outer world to give them what they cannot find within. This nagging sense of inner poverty, which differs from the peace that comes from a genuine poverty of spirit, leads codependents to attach themselves to others by making themselves helpful and needed. Being needed by others provides a feeling of value and positive identity for those whose inner world is filled with negative self-

images and low self-esteem. It is not difficult to see how codependents become addicted to work or ministry. Their need to be needed makes them acutely sensitive to others' expectations and desires, and their low self-esteem predisposes them to seek their value in doing for others. Their generosity and self-sacrifice is often affirmed and reinforced by significant others—family, friends, church, colleagues—who come to depend on what the codependent does for them.

Compensatory Activity. Codependents use activity and relationships to avoid the inner world. The outer-directed focus that characterizes codependency serves as a defense against feeling the emptiness, pain, and anxiety within. The compulsive, self-protective nature of codependents' activities goes unrecognized by them because of the feelings of gratification and self-worth they derive from doing things for others. Unlike the contemplative-in-action, whose doing flows out of a rich inner life of prayer and discernment, the codependent is moved to action by the urgency of an inner emptiness seeking to be filled. At its core, codependency is a spiritual problem that arises from a lack of healthy self-knowledge and self-love. Unable to believe in their own inherent goodness, codependents find it hard to trust in God's unconditional love for them. When codependents talk about their childhood, they rarely remember any consistent experience of feeling loved and appreciated for being themselves. More often they recall stories in which they were loved only when they met others' expectations and criticized when they failed to do so, leaving them with a sense of shame and failure.

Shame. Shame plays an important role in the dynamics of the codependent, whose unique personality was never appreciated and validated. Conditional love makes a child feel bad. Eventually, children with this experience internalize a sense of shame about themselves and feel that they are to blame for not being good enough to be loved. They learn to hide their true feelings behind a flexible facade that adapts itself to whatever is expected. Thus, the stage is set for a life-long pattern of self-rejection and abandonment in favor of caring for others. In so doing, the codependent hopes to be found good enough to be cared for in return.

People-pleasing. The theme of "not good enough" pervades codependents' lives and feelings. Being human is never good enough for them, because they equate incompleteness and imperfection with being unforgivably flawed and believe they must redeem themselves by their own efforts and earn the right to be valued and loved by both God and others. Having never felt loved without condition, codependents lack the innate sense of self-care that would make them sensitive to their own needs.

Thus, they are often incapable of finding a balance between activity (doing) and passivity (being). When conditional love and acceptance is all a person has ever known, he or she will continue to search for what has been missed, usually through hard work and pleasing others, and repressing any feelings, impulses, or behaviors that might bring criticism or disapproval. In other words, he or she copes by being false. This dependency on others' approval imprisons the codependent in a world of pretense.

Perfectionism. Codependents strive for perfection of self rather than acceptance of self. Haunted by feelings that they are never good enough, they work diligently and endlessly at trying to perfect themselves and their world. Most codependents, because they have never known anything except conditional acceptance and love, believe that they are not acceptable or lovable unless they are perfect. The illusion of perfection permeates their fantasies and plans. They hold idealized goals for themselves and others and are easily discouraged, sometimes enraged, at their own or others' failure to achieve what they imagine. Codependents are particularly prone to depression as a result of their perfectionism. The realization that they cannot control the world plunges them into a state of helplessness and hopelessness that makes them cling all the more to something or someone outside themselves for a sense of security. They sincerely believe that it is possible to achieve perfection if they can just figure out how to do it.

Controlling. The perfectionism of the codependent is also manifested in a style of relationship that is based on control and manipulation rather than honesty and mutuality. When codependents feel insecure and powerless, they compensate by acting the opposite. Codependent people can become adept at managing others in order to get the attention and approval they need. Their painful feelings of helplessness are denied and converted to feelings of power by focusing all their attention on meeting the needs of others. They have a way of getting into others' lives by making themselves needed and then helping in ways that point to their own generosity and self-sacrifice. Others exist to make the codependent feel needed. Although codependents would be the last to see this shadow side of their helpfulness, they relate to others as objects that they use to give themselves a sense of purpose and value. Another aspect of the dark side of the need of codependents to help others is that they do this in a way that makes others dependent on them. Genuine helping, in contrast to codependent helping, is not primarily self-serving but arises out of genuine empathy and compassion. Because it is a response to another's real need for help, not one's own need to be helpful, it quietly enables those served to

become healthier, more autonomous persons. In other words, authentic service, because it is freely given, is liberating and life-giving to all involved.

CONTEMPLATIVE SOLITUDE

The codependent way of being, because it is primarily reactive to others, lacks the personal freedom and creativity that characterize mature psychological and spiritual development. The focus of the codependent (false) self is always on the outer world because a life-giving connection to a vital inner world is missing. Holistic spiritual growth requires what the codependent avoids—the solitude and honest self-reflection that create the space and conditions in which intimacy with self, with God, and with others can grow. A common pitfall for codependents is their tendency to mistake their excessively busy schedules and superficial relationships for authentic Christian living and to think themselves exempted from the need for solitude, leisure, and prayer. Experiencing themselves as indispensable and sometimes overwhelmed by the demands of their work or ministry, codependents easily fall into the trap of believing “my work is my prayer.” The busy school principal who wearily says, “When I finish this job in a few years, then I’ll have time to attend to my spiritual life” is a common example of a sincere person who is unconsciously living in the bondage of codependency. The codependent, if he or she is ever to break out of this unauthentic pattern of living, must begin by recognizing the reciprocal relationship between service and solitude. Just as a genuine spiritual life must issue forth in service, true Christian service must be rooted in prayer and love.

As a corrective to the tendency of codependents to look outside themselves to receive a sense of identity, contemplation invites them to solitude, where the sense of self can be shaped. It is only in the silent matrix of solitude that the unique dimensions of the self are fathomed. Solitude is a time for intimacy with one’s self. A graphic description of this aspect of solitude was once provided by a most unlikely source—an 11-year-old adolescent. Breaking in on a conversation between his parents about the importance of solitude for the spiritual life, he asked, “Is it like when I go into my room and sit in the corner by myself and the outside noises [like the banging of the pots in the kitchen] get smaller and the inside noises get bigger?” Listening sensitively to one’s inner voices, acquainting oneself with the various parts that constitute the self, and befriending the self as good company—all these things are what solitude makes possible. By allowing codependents to get in touch with the currents of their lives, solitude makes an inner life possible. It undergirds a true spirituality because it is an essential condition for at-homeness with oneself and intimacy with God and others.

One of the hallmarks of authentic spiritual and psychological growth is an increase in one’s ability to accept and lovingly embrace all of who one is. Johannes Metz speaks of this in his book *Poverty of Spirit* when he says that the hardest task for us is to accept our human condition. He speaks of a universal temptation to reject our being, to flee from being fully human. He goes so far as to say that this is the reason God had to make it a commandment to love oneself. Perhaps this is a way to understand the nature of sin: it is the rejection of the human condition and the refusal to say yes to being incomplete and essentially poor. Codependency, from a spiritual perspective, is a contemporary way of speaking about this denial of creaturehood.

Wholeness and liberation, not perfection and control, are the goals of holistic Christian development. Codependents must learn to shift their focus from the outer world on which they feel so dependent to the inner world in which the unloved child of the past awaits their attention and love. They must learn to invite God, the true source of their identity and security, into their inner poverty and to trust that unconditional Love waits there to embrace them and to transform their shame and pain into the consolation of a Love that has no requirements or limits. Contemplative prayer is a way by which this transformation can occur.

IMAGINATIVE CONTEMPLATION AND HEALING

Just as codependents can reclaim the self in the regenerative moments provided by solitude, they can also profit by contemplating on scripture, which reveals the healing presence of Christ today. St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, presents a way of praying with scripture that uses the imagination to lead one into a more intimate relationship with the Lord. Called imaginative contemplation, it is similar to the therapeutic method of active imagination used by Carl Jung to help people become more aware of their unconscious. In this method we are invited to contemplate a gospel scene by moving with our imagination and senses directly into an event and reliving it as if it were our own experience. This immersion allows the gospel event to spring to life and to involve us actively as participants. When we encounter Jesus this way, we receive an intimate, felt knowledge of him as a vibrant person, and the gospel events with which we are so familiar take on new meaning for our lives today.

A simple approach to imaginative contemplation with scripture contains three steps that move us into a progressively deeper experience of a mystery of faith. First, the account of an event in scripture, such as the cure of the blind beggar Bartimaeus at the end of the Way section in Mark’s gospel (10:46–52), is read. Second, we identify with one of the

onlookers and describe the action from his or her point of view. This is done as if the event were actually unfolding right now in front of our eyes. Third, we insert ourselves into the event by identifying with one of the active participants in the scene. As we experience what is happening in the gospel scene, we are advised to be aware of our entire subjective response—of what we are thinking, sensing, and feeling.

As often happens in a psychodrama or a play, there can come a time in contemplation when the artificiality of the put-on identity slips away and the gospel character comes to life in us. Then it is no longer Bartimaeus the blind beggar who is being summoned to Jesus and being healed, but the blind person in us who is being led out of the darkness of personal confusion by the Lord's healing touch. It is no longer Bartimaeus who is crying out with desperation for help, but a desperately blind part of us that seeks enlightenment. It is no longer just a study of the historical Jesus interacting with people in biblical times, but the risen Christ healing us today. When our contemplation shifts from imaginative role-playing to spontaneous identification, we can get drawn into a graced encounter with the risen Christ.

Imaginative contemplation can be a powerful way for codependents to hear the Word of God being addressed to them in the present. This method of prayer connects them with aspects of themselves that have been unconsciously repressed or consciously suppressed in order to cope with childhood wounds or present pain. In either case, disowning parts of oneself is like saying to members of a family that there is no place for them at home. It is a denial of the total self that leads to self-alienation and fragmentation. When codependents suppress parts of themselves, they not only blot them out of their minds but also exclude them from their prayer, keeping these often wounded parts out of the Lord's healing reach. The struggle for wholeness is greatly supported by prayer once codependents acknowledge their fragmented state and let their struggling parts be addressed by the Word of God.

When codependents begin to pray in this way, they are usually surprised by the sudden emergence of suppressed parts demanding attention. The attention these disowned aspects need is not only that of the codependent but also that of the Lord. Contemplative prayer allows the Word of God to address these rejected parts with the good news of the Savior's affirming love. In the safety of prayer, for example, the codependent, like Nicodemus under the safe cover of darkness, can surface to meet the Lord. The dejected part wallowing in self-hatred can hear God say to it what was addressed to Jesus at the river Jordan: "You are my . . . beloved; my favor rests on you" (Mark 1:11). The compulsive helper seeking external validation

Imaginative contemplation trains one to spot the similarities between scriptural events and one's own life experiences

can be calmed by hearing Yahweh say quietly, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). The wounded inner child can drop the pretense of being perfect and hear the Lord say to it, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you" (Isa. 43:5). The chronic worrier of sleepless nights can find consolation in the Lord's assurance that "There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). The shameful part can let its confusion and guilt be dissolved by the unconditional acceptance of Jesus, who says to it what he said to the adulterous woman: "Has no one condemned you? . . . Neither do I condemn you" (John 8: 10–11). By allowing these parts to approach the Lord in the intimacy of prayer, imaginative contemplation can help codependents experience a powerfully transforming encounter with the living Word of God.

Imaginative contemplation can bring hope to the struggling codependent. Theologian William Spohn captures the value of contemplating scripture through the method of identification with gospel characters when he states,

As we tangibly and visually move into their narrated encounter with the Lord, we find in ourselves some echo of their response: If Peter could be forgiven, so can I. If the father could welcome home the prodigal son, then my fears of God's anger are without foundation. We learn to "ask for what we want" in these contemplations by the example of these characters in the story. They raise our expectations and open us to hear the Lord's word to us today.

For codependents, an important value of imaginative contemplation is that it trains them to spot

the similarities existing between scriptural events and their own life experiences. Helping them identify the analogy between biblical situations and their own moves them from the memory of God's intervention in the past to a perception of divine intervention in their present crisis. This insight is liberating for those who have been blinded by codependency.

INTERNALIZING THE LOVE OF GOD

Contemplation releases the stranglehold of perfectionism by exposing flawlessness as a false condition for self-acceptance and God's love. By focusing codependents' attention on God's personal and infinite love for them, contemplation helps them to accept that the Spirit's creative power is continually working in them, not demanding that they become perfect but desiring that they become whole. Contemplation opens the ears of the codependent to the good news of Christian spirituality, to the messages that they are creatures who are by nature radically unfinished and yet filled with stunning grace, that personhood is oriented to completions that are received rather than achieved.

The codependent's struggle with self-acceptance is complicated by the fact that it cannot be selective. It is futile to conduct an inventory of oneself by claiming some parts as good and discarding others as undesirable. Psychologically speaking, healthy self-acceptance cannot be based on denial and projection. Maturity will elude codependents as long as they try to disown unattractive parts of themselves and project them onto others. Only by embracing the totality of who they are as people uniquely fashioned by the Lord can they progress spiritually. Paradoxically, this acceptance, instead of leading to self-complacency, can be the beginning of growth and change. Acceptance allows the walls of self-defensiveness to crumble and permits the energies formerly wasted on battling the truth of who one is to be converted to peaceful reconstruction of the self under the guidance of God's Spirit. Factored into the reality of Christian self-acceptance is the humble acknowledgment that at every point in life one is called to conversion.

A Zen master in San Francisco is said to have assigned this mantra to his enlightenment-seeking disciples: "What you are is enough! What you have is enough!" Through repetition and internalization, the mantra was meant to calm the inner storm of self-dissatisfaction. The wisdom of the Zen master's guidance is especially applicable to codependents. Because it is easier to say no to ourselves instead of yes, all asceticism must first be designed to serve this great yes. But for Christians, asceticism alone cannot achieve self-love. Only God's grace can. Unlike Zen Buddhists, Christians must achieve love of self not by any ascetical repetition

of spiritual mantras but by receiving it as a gift from God. Thus, St. Ignatius of Loyola encourages retreatants making the Spiritual Exercises to pray for the grace to know in a deeply felt way that they are limited yet good, sinful yet loved.

In the end, codependents must root their self-acceptance on an act of faith in the God who created them and deemed them to be good. Because the Creator of the universe regards them as utterly worthwhile, they are likewise challenged to acknowledge their own radical goodness. Grounded on the unconditional acceptance of God, who delights in them, they need to experience a conversion in regard to themselves—a fundamental shift from being self-depreciative to being self-appreciative. Such a conversion will manifest itself psychologically as a growing realization that they are valuable human beings, lovable for who they are and not for what they do. A conversion such as this can lead to a positive reimagining of the self.

Defining faith as the courage to accept our acceptance despite feelings of unacceptability, Paul Tillich makes self-acceptance a matter of faith. According to Tillich, this self-affirming faith comes only when a person is struck by God's grace. In his sermon "You Are Accepted," he described this identity conversion.

Do you know what it means to be struck by grace? . . . We cannot transform our lives, unless we allow them to be transformed by the stroke of grace. It happens or it does not happen. And certainly it does not happen if we try to force it upon ourselves, just as it shall not happen so long as we think, in our self-complacency, that we have no need of it. Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a shaft of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted. You are accepted," accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted. If that happens to us, we experience grace. . . .

Thus, for codependents, fulfillment of the gospel commandment to love themselves is made possible when grace convinces them of their acceptability through their experience of being accepted by One who is greater than themselves. This identity conversion is a pure gift. Codependents cannot force self-acceptance. Neither can they force others to accept them. But, as Tillich writes, "sometimes it happens that [they] receive the power to say 'yes' to [themselves], that peace enters into [them] and

makes [them] whole, that self-hatred and self-contempt disappear, and that [their] self is reunited with itself. Then [they] can say that grace has come upon [them]."

A religious conversion such as this brings about a basic shift in attitude in the codependent that can at times be quite dramatic, but generally it is not a once-and-for-all experience. Ordinarily, it is a life-long process. Moments of deep consolation in prayer that assure us of God's unshakable love and our absolute loveliness, for example, are important religious experiences, but their impact often diminishes with the passage of time. Thus, Ignatius of Loyola advises people to record these graced moments of insight as reminders to help them when they find themselves slipping into old patterns of self-rejection. At these moments of desolation, it is important to wait in hope for the return of God's affirming consolation. Contemplation thus becomes critical throughout the lives of codependents because it keeps them in touch with this Source of unconditional love.

CONTEMPLATION THE KEY

Contemplation is a way of activating the imagination for the sake of personal freedom. It is an act that challenges codependents to see how the Lord of history, who unshackled the Israelites from Egyptian chains, continues to be available to them in their experience of captivity. Contemplation is letting the great saving event of the Exodus become a pattern of understanding life. During contemplation, codependents are invited to see the analogy between events of biblical times and their own lives, to spot the similarity between the God who liberated the Israelites from the pharaoh's power

and the Compassionate One who now stands in their lives with the same desire and power to liberate.

Contemplation ultimately invites codependents to foster a healthy reliance on God, the radically Other who is for us. Paradoxically, dependence on God is unlike forms of immature dependence that leave the person "taken care of," feeling inadequate and impotent. On the contrary, dependence on God allows enabling grace and the reassurance of divine assistance to motivate codependents to take charge of their lives as competent adults. As they become more and more convinced through contemplation of their intrinsic value in God's eyes, they become better able to claim the right and freedom to live abundant lives.

RECOMMENDED READING

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Restructuring the Sisters of Mercy

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In our day, transformation engages the hopeful energy of political, social, economic, and ecclesial systems. All these systems find themselves poised on the edge of breakdown. The possibility of breakthrough struggles with the possibility of demise. In this milieu, many voices in North America raise the question, What is the future of religious life?

The decade of the nineties is widely viewed as a time of crisis for Roman Catholic religious institutes. Some regard the period as an opportunity for transformation and new life, while others see on the horizon the demise of this particular canonical structure.

In this context, a recent decision to amalgamate seventeen independent congregations of Sisters of Mercy in the United States into one religious institute has been attracting attention and critique for its contribution to this question of the future of religious life. The restructuring will create a new reality—the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas—with more than seven thousand members. At the same time, the restructuring necessitates dismantling the four-thousand-member Sisters of Mercy of the Union, founded in 1929. For the Union membership, therefore, this decision was one involving both death and transition as well as the hope of transformation.

As members of the last leadership team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union, we thought it valuable to record that experience from the Union perspective and to discuss what we learned from it

about what it takes for a people to make a future together.

We found in some words of Martin Buber an apt characterization of our ten-year journey toward a new institute: "In the beginning was relationship." Decades earlier Catherine McAuley, the Mercy foundress, anticipated Buber's moving comment in accounting for how she happened to start a religious congregation: "It commenced with two, Sister Doyle and I." This phrase was repeated frequently during the discernment that led to the new Mercy Institute. The sisters were reminded often and well that their foundress never thought of the order as beginning with herself, but rather with herself in relationship. The past—as well as the present and the future—of the Sisters of Mercy (and perhaps of religious life) rests, then, not in persons or in structures but in relationship. In the 160-year history of the Institute of Mercy, this has been the dynamism creating and re-creating structures of service, governance, and common life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A brief look at history explains the Union's unique position among the seventeen amalgamating congregations, and why the Union is the only congregation whose dissolution is involved in the restructuring.

In the 1920s there were more than sixty Mercy

motherhouses in the United States. Although a few smaller joinings had occurred since the turn of the century, the largest single movement toward consolidation was in 1929, when thirty-nine motherhouses agreed to form the Sisters of Mercy of the Union. All of the sixty groups claimed Catherine McAuley as their foundress and recognized themselves as sharing one charism. With the 1929 amalgamation, slightly more than half the Mercy sisters in the United States became members of the Union. Although this movement was followed by several years of mutual defensiveness between those who did and those who did not respond to that particular reorganization, topics of common interest and concern continued to draw the sisters together. In 1955 the congregations that had elected not to participate in forming the Union created the McAuley Conference for the purpose of exchanging ideas among themselves. A scant two years later one of the members proposed inviting all the provincials of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union to the McAuley Conference meetings. This proposal was controversial at first, but by 1965 the conference had decided to dissolve itself and reorganize as a federation in which representatives of the nine provinces of the Union would have equal voice with the representatives of the other congregations. The Federation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, resolving to honor the autonomy of the constituent congregations, was launched.

From the standpoint of the Union, membership in the Federation was certainly fruitful, but it was also often duplicative of interprovincial meetings and programs. In addition, each province was expected to contribute financial as well as human resources to support both the Union and the Federation. This state of affairs made many Union members receptive to even the earliest vague proposals for yet another restructuring when these began to be voiced around 1980. By this time awareness of the systemic nature of forces contrary to the gospel was awakening in the sisters a desire to claim the fullness of their corporate strength and to use it to best advantage in responding to the cries of the poor. Round after round of community meetings drew from the total membership of the Mercy congregations their thoughts as to whether and how to reorganize. By 1984 a single model had emerged from these discussions. What seemed to accommodate best the kind of relating the sisters wanted for themselves was quite similar to the model that already existed in the Union—a single general government with multiple units (provinces) enjoying broad powers of self-governance for the missioning of members, the sponsoring of institutional apostolates, and the management of finances. The unit structure was seen as critical for continuing and enhancing historical bonds of sisterhood.

Through all these discussions Union participa-

Many found it hard to be enthusiastic about rearranging congregational boundaries when the world at large was falling apart

tion was conducted and recorded on a province-by-province basis. In other words, each one of the provinces was acting like, and being perceived as, a peer to the independent congregations that comprised the Federation. This misperception was highlighted at the end of 1985, when a straw vote was taken on the proposed reorganization. Not surprisingly, there were differences among the nine provinces as to their level of endorsement of the proposal, prompting the question of whether a province of the Union would be free to make a decision independent of the Union as a whole. Recognition that such was not the case was an important clarifying moment for the provinces of the Union. The relational question before them was not the same as the relational question being considered by the independent congregations.

Another way in which the issue was unique for Union members related to the model itself. Since the proposed governance structure so closely resembled the Union, members wondered whether by assenting to reorganization they would really be getting anything new, and whether the potentially larger relational circle would be worth the price of their own congregation's demise. Some specific costs members were able to name were loss of momentum, loss of identity and solidarity, and, quite simply, loss of time. Many found it hard to be enthusiastic about rearranging congregational boundaries when their apostolic instincts were telling them the world was falling apart—nations were at war, people were deprived and oppressed, the planet itself was at risk. In the face of such need, they reasoned, who had time for internal concerns—particularly if they were going to be addressed by taking a step already taken by the Union in 1929?

By the time the amalgamation question came up for definitive consideration, however, the relational

For the general chapter meeting in 1988 an explicitly relational theme was chosen: "Not for Ourselves Alone / No Sólo para Nosotras"

dimension of the issue had moved forward in the community's consciousness. For the general chapter meeting in 1988 an explicitly relational theme was chosen: "Not for Ourselves Alone / No Sólo para Nosotras." This theme reflected a growing awareness that while the relations of the Union were precious, they were not inclusive enough to address the challenges of a church seeking greater global solidarity and a Mercy tradition seeking to express its own multicultural reality. Although the question before the delegates was posed in straightforward organizational terms, the question they carried in their hearts went beyond and beneath these organizational concerns. A unanimous vote for the restructuring signaled the depth of that conviction.

EXPERIENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION

In the beginning was relationship (Martin Buber tells us), in the end will be relationship, and in between there is relationship. Such an understanding of human experience insists that all planning and implementation reflect the affective as well as the effective elements involved. Appropriately, the Sisters of Mercy of the Union began early the conversation regarding both aspects of their choice. As soon as the 1985 straw vote made clear the momentum of a choice for life through death, planning and implementation began to look toward mourning and diminishment as well as dismantling and distribution. Having chosen a new relationship with persons who shared the same charism and mission, the congregation now needed to tend carefully the persons, the charism, and the mission embodied in their identity as Sisters of Mercy of the Union.

The questions were numerous: How to provide for the continuance of incorporated works? How to

distribute equitably the financial assets of the congregation? How / when to cease "business as usual"? How to celebrate / mourn the loss of the Union? How to celebrate / mourn the loss of familiar structures of governance? How / when to notify external publics of the happenings internally? How to provide for sisters who could not continue the journey with us into this new future? How to provide for personnel at the central office and accompany their process of "letting go"?

The feelings were equally numerous: elation, excitement, frustration, anger, grief, anxiety, apathy, loneliness, powerlessness, confusion, impatience, hope, fear, disillusionment, and for most everyone, dread of the many adjustments change would require.

In the face of the multitudinous questions and emotions, there was some gratification in turning to the concrete aspects of dismantling the Sisters of Mercy of the Union. These included tasks like disposing of the financial assets and arranging for the continuance of incorporated works for which the Union itself was responsible. There were also financial, archival, and communications services to be phased out. Most aspects of this work were facilitated greatly by the fact that there was in place a transition team operating on behalf of the developing new institute, setting up the very central services that the Union was dismantling. Through close cooperation and planning, many resources were converted or adapted as necessary and transferred from one organization to the other. In the case of the incorporated works, joint discussions with boards and staffs produced a proposal to seek sponsorship by the new institute, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Planning and executing the distribution of the Union's assets, on the other hand, was a more complicated venture.

Fortunately, groundwork for the financial task had begun as early as 1986 with a general chapter resolution stating broad principles for the administration to follow in asset distribution. Using these as a baseline, we engaged the provincial administrators—and, through them, other community members—in building a consensus as to how the Union's monies should be allocated. The principal beneficiaries were the nine provinces, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and specific works of mercy. So as not to extend exclusively interprovincial relations into the new institute, a corporation the provinces had formed to assist one another financially in caring for retired members was dissolved. The Union's own civil corporation was also effectively discontinued by disposing of all its responsibilities and assets and naming the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas as its successor in interest.

The dismantling of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union, however, is not just a matter of such concrete realities. How, in the face of its institutional demise, could the congregation conserve its spiri-

tual legacy, accumulated over some six decades and expressed in thousands of lives spent following Catherine McAuley's way of Christian discipleship? Efforts to create a context of art and ritual to mark both the loss and the pain, the sorrow and the joy of the times began with the 1988 chapter. Videotapes of persons important in the relationships of both Union and Federation highlighted moments of joy and pain in both realities. A mime poignantly portrayed a lone figure packing the belongings of our history as the Union away in an old trunk in order to travel lightly into a new world of community and service.

This chapter was also responsible for electing the final leadership team. Perhaps the nearness of the Union's death had contributed to the situation that found only the incumbents standing for election. Once again, affective and effective aspects of the moment were brought sharply to mind when the facilitator of the election process challenged both the nominees and the electors to "take a passionate posture even toward the inevitable." In their dialogue with the reelected team, the delegates echoed the "passionate posture" advice, urging the leadership group to continue setting priorities for engaging the community's energies and not to be afraid of beginning worthwhile ventures that might last beyond the Union's lifetime.

Believing that a major task of our administration would be drawing to closure the history of the Union, we planned a gala celebration of the congregation's sixtieth anniversary in 1989. Each province sent a delegation consisting of members professed in each of the six decades of the Union's existence. A book-length history of the Union, commissioned by the administrative team and written by a Union member, was distributed at the principal anniversary celebration and subsequently at the in-province celebrations that followed. Throughout the provinces, members were encouraged to offer, in lots of sixty, "gifts to the poor" to mark the Union's birthday.

For the Union's final year we devised a communication plan that included a series of circular letters to the community, which recalled the familiar foundation circulars of Catherine McAuley. We also decided to ritualize in a simple way the various transactions that implemented our asset-distribution decisions. A special note card was designed for this purpose, utilizing the Twelfth General Chapter theme, "Not for Ourselves Alone / No Sólo para Nosotras." We also initiated a project designed to prepare our hearts for a sensitive commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the evangelization of the Americas. The project was designed to outlive the Union, as its last phase in 1992 would be planned and executed within each province by that province's participants.

In our own daily lives of administration, an important ending came with our move to a smaller

office with a reduced staff. Sensitivity to the shifting relationships among and between personnel, most of whom would be employed by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, prompted a final staff retreat in September 1990 and an appreciation party near Thanksgiving Day. The staff retreat, especially, marked an opportunity for mutual sharing among ourselves and our colleagues, which confirmed the belief, expressed in our *Constitutions*, that "by collaborating with others in works of mercy we continually learn from them how to be more merciful."

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNINGS

And what have we learned from our experience about what it takes for a people to make a future together? We have learned anew the profound reality of the paschal mystery, that human persons let go life for life. Through the years of discussion, evaluation, and reflection, motivation for change found its source in affective elements—a common story, a common vision, a desire to serve together a world in need—rather than in effective ones—demographic studies, sharing of personnel, reduction of governance structures. Only when theory and plan touched the deep myth of our reality as Sisters of Mercy did we release the power to choose death for the sake of life enhanced.

We have also learned that the process of choosing to merge or restructure requires much energy. Concentration on essential and important matters is necessary for sustaining the congregation through long weeks and months, even years, of transition. In light of this, we question whether a congregation can choose such a direction if it is actually in a dying modality. To be able to take the time and deploy the energy required for dealing with affective and effective elements, a congregation must operate from an attitude of strength.

We would also suggest, however, that a clear choice to merge and/or to restructure may help produce an attitude of strength. We have found that the various Mercy networks of ministry and shared interest that helped draw us into restructuring are themselves taking on new life in the clarity and energy of this moment of choice.

Fundamentally, we have learned that the choice to restructure has been servant to a recommitment to relationship. Few among us would claim certainty that the structure we have chosen represents the "right," the "most creative," the "radical" path. We have, however, sensed a deep resonance between our choice and the tradition of Mercy, which calls us to stand with and for one another, with and for our world. While the future may well hold further modifications of the organizational form initiated in 1991, most of us are certain we have chosen the right future: to be in relationship. We are quite willing to allow experience to tell us whether we have chosen the right structure.

In the heart of that recommitment to relationship lies also a struggle to learn how to relate in attitudes and structures that recognize our responsibility to a world in which many cultures express both human experience and the Christian reality. While the motherhouses of all current units of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas are located in the United States, we have nearly two hundred Sisters of Mercy indigenous to some eight countries other than the United States. These indigenous groupings represent a future for Mercy marked by the riches of multicultural exchange and diversity—but only if all of us can broaden our hearts and structures toward mutuality and inclusivity. Even as Sisters of Mercy in the Americas affirm a marvelous desire to be in communion, a new and deeper challenge of relationship is taking shape and calling us forward.

In the beginning was relationship, in the end will be relationship, and in between there is relationship.



Sister Helen Amos, R.S.M., president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union, has served in leadership roles within her congregation during the past twenty years.



Sister Helen Marie Burns, R.S.M., is vice-president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union. She is past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

Help Children Survive Divorce

It is estimated that divorce affects nearly one million American children each year. Conflict between parents still living together disturbs the lives of countless other children. "I'd say that 20 percent of kids in school today are suffering the effects of some kind of battle between their parents," observes psychotherapist Dr. J. Brien O'Callaghan, who serves as a consultant to the Connecticut public school system. He adds, "The No. 1 cause of any childhood education problem is some disagreement between parents."

Psychotherapist Frances M. Rock, who works with children whose parents are going through divorce, has found that placing these children in therapy groups can be very beneficial to them. "Kids whose families are going through a divorce really need a comfortable place to talk. Just like adults, if they know someone else has a problem, they can start to feel better about it," she says. Ms. Rock finds that "most of the kids who come in here tell me that theirs is the only family they know of that is divorced." Moreover, she reports, "almost every child I see thinks the divorce is their fault."

Psychiatrist Stephen P. Hermon, author of the recently published *Parent vs. Parent*, a book on the impact of custody battles on children, believes that "the idea that children need help when parents are going

through a divorce is catching on. Just about 100 percent of children develop some kind of symptoms when their parents go through a divorce." Regarding the question of whether their problems warrant professional help, Dr. Hermon writes, "In an ideal world, I think everyone—children and adults—should have that option. And when a child is not functioning properly, I think it is something you really have to do."

Ms. Rock finds that most children go through predictable stages in reacting to a divorce. "They begin by denying what's happening and thinking their parents will get back together," she says. They soon become angry, "most especially at the parent who has left." Sadness follows, with "a lot of tears and crying. This is the painful stage. Then many kids go back to denial again after they've come to grips with the situation. Finally they accept it."

In recommending professional counseling for children trapped in a divorce situation, Ms. Rock points out that most parents "can't understand how their kids feel about it. They think that as long as they are open and honest, the kids will be O.K. Well, they probably will eventually, but they need to talk about it. It's not only the parents who are being divorced but the kids too. And they can't develop a new way of being a family until they've effectively divorced the old."

Determinants of a Minister's Well-Being

Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.

Curt Conway was 44 years old when his world started to cave in. Basically, Curt was a well-liked, hardworking priest who would never refuse a request to help anyone in need. It was during the third year of an assignment to a very needy central-city parish that Curt began experiencing anxiety attacks that compounded his chronic insomnia. For twenty-six years Curt had belonged to a religious congregation that was noted for its undaunted commitment to the poor. At first, Curt's personal physician had prescribed Valium for his symptoms. Initially, the medication had worked, but ever-increasing doses were needed to calm Curt's furies. It was then that he stopped taking the medication and sought psychological counseling that focused on coping and stress management. Like the medication, this seem to help for a while, but nine months later Curt's superior arranged for him to take a sabbatical leave, during which he began experiencing bouts of depression. Curt was assigned to a renewal center, where he participated in a comprehensive treatment program that included psychiatric and preventive care in addition to spiritual renewal. During the course of the program, he was able to step back and assess the patterns of stresses in his recent pastoral assignments, his theology of ministry, and the structure and culture of his religious order, as well as his own health and personality in terms of strengths and vulnerabilities. In consultation with his superior,

and as part of his aftercare, Curt was assigned to the formation team at the order's scholasticate. There the setting, structure, and culture of his ministry would be more reflective and less driven. As part of its strategic planning, the order had decided that the increasing numbers of priests who were burning out and becoming impaired called for a reexamination of the order's style of ministry. They concluded that change was indeed necessary, beginning with formation. During his sabbatical, Curt had taken some graduate courses in spirituality, which enabled him to assume the role of a spiritual director in the order's formation house. Curt continued in his aftercare for two years, during which time he adapted with some difficulty to a new style and mode of ministry and living. Four years later, Curt continued to live a relatively balanced and rewarding life-style.

Curt's case (actually a composite) exemplifies a number of features common in professional ministries today: high-demand ministry, stressful life circumstances, impaired functioning, comprehensive treatment, and ministry reentry and reassignment. But it also points up a number of questions, including: Why were psychological counseling and stress management ineffective? Would Curt's recovery have come about if changes in his theology of ministry and the order's organizational structure and culture, as well as reassignment, had not occurred? A basic assumption of best-selling books

on stress and burnout, such as Herbert J. Freudenberger and Geraldine Richelson's *Burnout* and even professional books on the subject, is that burnout and impairment represent deficits in an individual's ability to cope with stress, rather than deficits in that person's job or the organization of which he or she is a part. Therefore, it should not be surprising that stress-management programs focus on improving employees' or managers' ability to accommodate and to cope with the stresses of the job and the organization. It has been our observation that burnout and impairment are as much a function of organizational structure, culture, and the individual's beliefs about his or her professional functioning (e.g., the minister's theology of ministry) as they are a function of stresses of the job or of individual vulnerabilities and lack of coping skills. Let's follow the case of Father Curt Conway more closely in terms of these four dimensions of ministry health and impairment.

FOUR INTERRELATED DETERMINANTS

On the basis of organizational systems theory and my twenty years of organizational consulting experience, pastoral psychotherapy, and practice of preventive medicine, I have come to appreciate that the dimensions of individual, vocation, assignment, and institution are four distinct but interrelated and intersecting determinants of health and impairment.

INDIVIDUAL

The first dimension, the minister as individual, includes the minister's strengths and vulnerabilities in terms of physical health and personality structure, as well as influences of the family of origin. In addition to anxiety and insomnia, Curt reported daily headaches and chronic sinus problems. On examination, his blood pressure was mildly elevated, as were his cholesterol and triglyceride levels. He reported that each day, he smoked two packs of cigarettes, drank ten cups of coffee, and drank two to three glasses of wine with dinner. He had gained approximately fifteen pounds in the preceding four months. Curt described his health as having been average to good until three years earlier. Psychologically, he could be described as achievement-oriented, perfectionistic, hypersensitive to criticism, and having a prominent need for approval from others.

Sociologist Joseph Fichter, S.J., studied the health of the clergy and summarized the results in "The Health of American Catholic Priests." This research project, sponsored by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry of the United States Catholic Conference, examined the subjective appraisal of how some 4,600 priests in twenty-one dioceses rated their own current state of

health. In brief, the study found that priests who faithfully observed five basic health behaviors were more likely to be physically fit than those who did not. The five health behaviors were maintaining sensible weight, getting enough sleep, getting sufficient exercise, not smoking, and moderating alcohol intake. While the majority of priests reported that they were physically healthy, 39.8 percent reported "severe personal, behavioral, or mental problems" during the previous twelve months. The study also noted that those who were in good physical health were also likely to report good emotional and mental balance. There was a high correlation between physical health and psychological health. The priests in the poorest physical health were consistently more afflicted with mental and emotional problems than were the healthiest. Finally, the study noted that a priest's overall health was significantly affected by the five basic health practices Fichter identified.

Other researchers note that ministers prone to chronic stress tend to share a number of psychological characteristics. These include idealism and overcommitment, a high drive for achievement, a high need for approval from others, vulnerability to the excessive demands of others, guilt about meeting one's own needs, a sense of hurry and impatience, and perfectionism that invites failure (see James Gill, S.J., "Burnout: A Growing Threat to Ministry," *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Summer 1980). Perfectionists tend to share a belief in the three O's: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. They act as though they must take responsibility for everything, and they find it difficult to delegate decision making to others (omnipotence). They believe that they should be totally competent and know everything there is to know about their work (omniscience). Finally, they believe that they should be available to those they serve seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, which effectively precludes time for rest and recreation (omnipresence). The three O's suggest godlike strivings that require herculean energy and commitment that few can maintain for long. Not surprisingly, anxiety, depression, guilt, self-doubt, and chronic frustration are common psychological symptoms experienced by these individuals. The tendency of perfectionists to overwork is most notable in individuals with obsessive-compulsive and narcissistic personality styles and less evident in those with dependent and passive-aggressive personality styles.

EARLY LIFE SIGNIFICANT

There is a growing awareness that an individual's personality style, vocational choice, and occupational behavior are greatly influenced by early life experiences. Family-of-origin research is beginning to provide useful insights into individuals' on-the-job behavior. For example, Janet Woititz

has reported research on employees who are adult children of dysfunctional families. She has found that these individuals hold a number of dysfunctional beliefs about themselves and work. The adult child of an alcoholic (ACOA) tends to believe the following about himself or herself as an employee: my self-worth depends on productivity; not getting along with coworkers or superiors means something is wrong with me; others will recognize my professional and personal incompetence, although I may seem to be the most qualified for the job; anything that goes wrong on the job is my fault.

Woititz's research also shows that superiors or managers who come from dysfunctional families of origin are characterized by certain behaviors and beliefs. These include demanding compliance of subordinates, demanding that changes occur overnight, wanting to be liked by everyone, keeping their personal feelings under control, and perfectionism. In addition, they tend to feel responsible for the well-being and survival of their subordinates. Thus, they will accommodate and cover up others' poor performance. This enabling pattern leads to mixed messages and confusion for coworkers.

For the most part, adult children of dysfunctional families are described as overachievers, in the burnout lane. But some are underachievers. Basically, these individuals limit their achievement because they refuse to give their superior the satisfaction of receiving quality work from them. As children, they came to believe they would never amount to anything, and they go on to prove this as adults on the job.

MINISTRY ASSIGNMENT

Specific demands and expectations related to a pastoral assignment can account for considerable stress, depending on a number of factors. Fortunately, these stresses can be neutralized by the support systems in a minister's job environment or living situation. Curt's central-city parish had once been one of the wealthiest in the diocese. Now the congregation's membership was less than one-half of what it had been during its heyday, and its collections and income were less than one-fourth. Typically, Curt's schedule included fifteen-hour days, seven days per week. Besides his sacramental responsibilities, Curt focused most of his energy and time on trying to help his elderly and otherwise disenfranchised parishioners obtain food and shelter and addressing other human rights issues. He admitted that he assumed too much responsibility and had difficulty delegating tasks and saying no. This ministry assignment had been exhilarating to him for approximately two years but was now becoming a burden. The pastoral team consisted of seven full-time individuals, including two religious sisters, one layperson, and three

The stresses of a pastoral assignment can be neutralized by the support systems in a minister's job environment or living situation

other priests of Curt's order. All of the priests had schedules about as hectic as Curt's. Although the four priests lived in the same house, they rarely saw each other, and usually only at dinner. Not surprisingly, Curt reported feeling isolated and lonely. He had no time for hobbies, and it had been two and a half years since he had taken a vacation. He had only one close friend and saw that person irregularly.

The year 1981 saw the beginning of a torrent of books and workshops on job burnout. This included a number of popular as well as professional books, such as the six-volume Addison-Wesley series on occupational stress. The basic premise of these books and workshops is that jobs can be hazardous to both physical and psychological well-being. Job stress has been associated with hypertension, coronary artery disease, a variety of cancers, and a number of other medical conditions, as well as substance abuse and psychiatric disorders.

With rare exception, authors and workshop presenters on stress research emphasize the process of learning better coping strategies to neutralize the stresses and strains of the workplace. Although the authors of professional texts on stress management may recognize that organizational structures can be a source of stress, they stop short of suggesting changing those structures. Why is this? Since many of these authors are medical directors or consultants employed by multinational corporations, they may be more than slightly reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them. The same theme runs through reports on ministry and stress. Take, for example, the report "The Priest and Stress," sponsored by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry of the United States Catholic Conference. It identifies some of the commonly recognized stresses in the lives of priests. Yet the policy statements in this document focus on the priest as an

individual. They advocate that priests alter their perceptions, set more realistic goals, and learn better coping skills to neutralize stress. Interestingly, the report does make some organizational policy statements, but these refer to changes involving individual priests. They recommend, for example, that priests be allowed to take sabbaticals and to pursue continuing education, that dioceses establish resources for clergy health and encourage priests to make annual retreats. No mention is made of changes in the structure or culture of a diocese or religious order.

THEOLOGIES OF MINISTRY

How an individual views his or her professional role and responsibilities can greatly influence that person's job performance, level of stress, and general sense of personal well-being. For example, the physician who believes that he or she must cure patients and defy death at all costs will approach patients and respond to stress differently than the physician who believes that his or her basic role is to encourage patients to take responsibility for their health.

Curt admitted that his spiritual life was unbalanced, with little or no time for prayer amid his many responsibilities. During the course of his treatment, Curt was helped to articulate his beliefs and assumptions about ministry. His theology of ministry was characterized by such beliefs as "Service to others is its own reward," "I am called to be a person for others," "The need of the community comes before my personal needs," and "I am called to be perfect." These beliefs probably accurately reflect not only his novitiate and seminary training but also his theological assumptions and ministry style. These other-oriented beliefs will also show up as resistance to psychotherapy and health care when the focus involves self-care and personal well-being. Often, an individual such as Curt will initially view the need for nurturance and self-care as contradictory to his or her religious training.

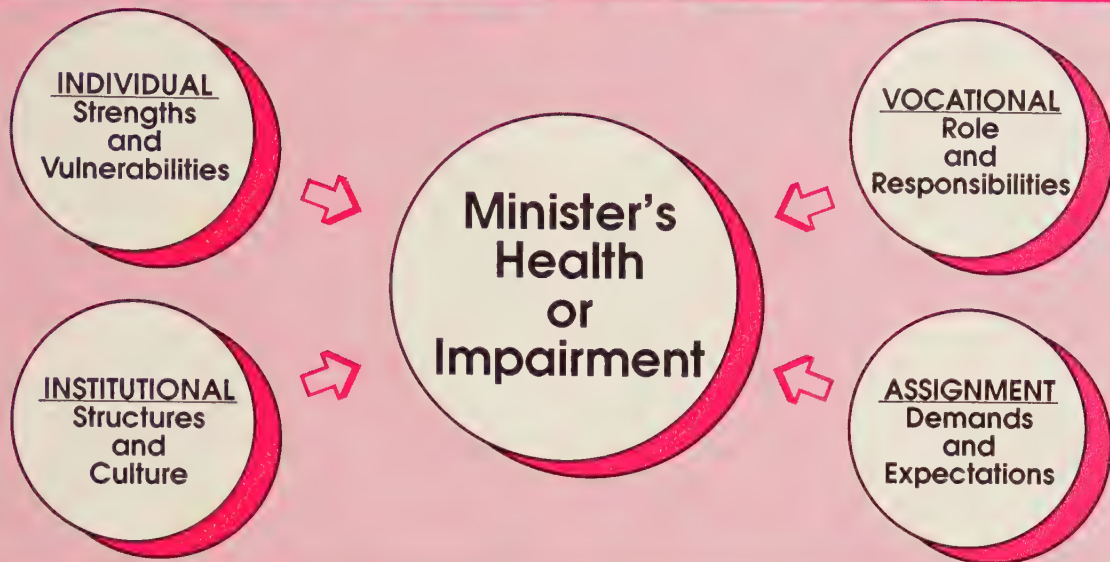
A minister's theology of ministry will greatly influence the purpose of, and the approach to, his or her ministry. Essentially, one's theology of ministry reflects one's basic ecclesiology. Just as there are widely different ecclesiologies and images of the church, there tend to be widely different theologies of ministry. In *The Catholic Priest: His Identity and Values*, John Fogarty identifies three groups of priests. First are priests who hold to a traditional view of the priesthood, for whom the transcendence of God and the divinity of Christ are of utmost importance, and whose priesthood reflects these values. These priests tend to be relatively comfortable with the pre-Vatican II theology and ministry, and uncomfortable with sharing power with the nonordained. Second are those who put more stress on God's immanence and on Jesus'

humanity, who try to discern the signs of the times and remain open to new possibilities. These priests tend to be comfortable with post-Vatican II theology and ministry and are not particularly threatened by the prospects of sharing power. Third are those whose image of the church is both hierarchical and mutual and who have the dual conviction that God is both transcendent and immanent. These priests either maturely integrate themes from both the transcendent and immanent or minister in a schizophrenic manner (e.g., they may preach the letter of the law from the pulpit yet be pastorally sensitive and open-minded in the confessional). Thus, it can be concluded that a minister's theology of ministry reflects some point along a continuum between transcendence and immanence.

Basically, then, there are two widely differing theologies of ministry. In one, the call to ministry is heard as a personal responsibility in which the minister focuses talented energy on serving others, upholding established policy and authority, maintaining hierarchy and control, and preserving the status quo. In this view, the health and well-being of the minister is a secondary consideration in the accomplishment of the mission. The focus is on action and results and the "doing" pole of existence. On the other hand, the call to ministry can be heard as a commitment to model the Lord's wholeness through presence, discernment, mutuality, empowerment, and transformation. In this view, the minister's own balanced life-style and mutual concern become the media through which the kingdom comes about. Doing springs from the "being" pole of existence, as action flows from contemplation. It is my clinical observation that a balanced and healthy theology of ministry is one that keeps the individual in touch with his or her humanity.

John Shea has articulated four code words—*presence, discernment, empowerment, and transformation*—to describe a theology of ministry that emphasizes the immanent and incarnational. Presence reflects the minister's basic stance of being with another in need, although it also includes listening, consoling, and supporting. Presence is different from the stance of doing something to or for another in need. Discernment is the process of listening, judging, and making decisions that encourage unity among diversity and stimulate the spiritual and moral lives of as many people as possible. It contrasts with a stance of reliance on authority and unquestioning acceptance of tradition and policy. Empowerment involves mutuality, collegial decisions, and shared responsibility. It is the polar opposite of domination and hierarchical power. Transformation connotes radical innovation with a focus on root causes of life issues and on the discontinuities of development rather than on symptoms, cosmetic changes, and the status quo. Transformation emphasizes more the prophetic than the priestly role.

Influences on a Minister's Well-Being



STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

Institutional or organizational structure and culture is the fourth dimension that can significantly affect a minister's health or impairment. Curt belongs to a medium-sized, progressive religious congregation whose mission includes high-school, college, and seminary teaching as well as parish work. Most of the members of Curt's province were involved in central-city ministry work and were deeply committed to justice and peace issues, while those involved in teaching were less so. Not surprisingly, this accounted for considerable tension within the order, particularly in Curt's province. The provincial leadership had recently changed, and although there was some hope that morale would increase, immediate priorities involved both financial and personnel matters. Benevolent but autocratic leadership with high expectations for achievement had characterized the management of the province as far back as Curt could recall, and strategic planning had never been a priority. Decisions about personnel assignments and policy matters seemed to have been based more on arbitrary decisions than on long-range planning or needs assessment of individuals or institutions. Although Curt was not usually one to complain and had difficulty showing his anger, he was able to get in touch with some of the anger and ambiguity he felt about the arbitrariness and lack of trust and ap-

proachability of his superiors and his deep sadness and loneliness over the years as he struggled to be affirmed by his superiors as a "good" religious.

Stephen Soroka suggests that the organizational design of the church itself may be the primary source and cause of stress experienced by ministers. He notes that organizational design refers to the formal, rational properties of an organization that can be readily controlled by those responsible for designing and/or managing it, such as the bishop of a diocese or a major superior. Components of organizational design that are particularly important in a discussion of ministry, health, and impairment are role structure, power structure, and the normative structure and culture of the organization.

Role structure refers to the ways in which tasks and duties are stated, organized, and allocated among specific roles in a setting. Person-role conflict becomes evident in situations in which the minister's ideals come in conflict with organizational self-interest and the church's bureaucratic mode of functioning. Role ambiguity occurs when the minister lacks information necessary to perform his role. Some sources of role ambiguity may be inherent in the minister's role, such as the lack of clear feedback concerning the results of one's work among others. In short, role structure affects the job-related stress of ministers through its impact on role conflict and ambiguity. Role conflict

and ambiguity make it difficult for ministers to meet the demands associated with their vocation. Consequently, ministers may find it difficult or impossible to achieve a sense of psychological and personal well-being in their work.

The second aspect of organizational design is the power structure. The degree to which a minister is able to exercise power and control over his work setting will influence the extent to which he feels helpless. The church's centralized and hierarchical approach to decision making effectively limits the autonomy and control that ministers experience in their work, contributing to their sense of helplessness and stress.

The normative structure of the church consists of its goals, norms, beliefs, and culture. This normative structure is not generally characterized by reinforcement of innovation, creativity, and risk taking. Rather, the emphasis of the church is on its mission of service to others in the organization, with minimal encouragement of personal growth and pursuit of knowledge as legitimate goals and activities in themselves. Therefore, individuals who are not perceived as loyal and hardworking organization people find it difficult to get their personal needs met. Role, power, and normative structures thus ultimately influence the extent to which a minister will experience stress from transient concerns, burnout, or impairment in ministry, as these components of the church's organization most directly influence ministerial life.

In management theory, two types of organizations can be described: theory X and theory Y organizations. The theory X, or traditional, organization operates according to the view that the individual dislikes work and responsibility and avoids both whenever possible, basically wants security, and prefers to be directed by another. Therefore, a hierarchical structure in which the leader engages in unilateral decision making and establishes communication channels that go downward and accountability patterns that go upward is consistent with this view of human nature. A leadership style consistent with theory X would embody a controlling, driving, and authoritarian manner.

The theory Y organization, on the other hand, is based on the view that people enjoy work and accept and seek responsibility, particularly if their creative and intellectual potentials can be actualized. This organizational structure tends more toward mutuality in decision making, two-way communication, and mutual accountability. The leadership style consistent with theory Y is more democratic, collegial, and consultative. For the most part, current church structure tends to be closer to theory X than to theory Y. In his book *Tomorrow's Catholics, Yesterday's Church*, Eugene Kennedy describes two expressions of church structure and culture, which he terms Culture I and

Culture II, that are roughly equivalent to theories X and Y.

COMPREHENSIVE MODEL NEEDED

The manifestations of a minister's stress and impairment may be more obvious than their causes. I have made the case that there are at least four types of determinants of not only ministerial impairment but also health, and I have suggested that theology of ministry and organizational factors are often ignored as causes. In the short run and the long run, reductionistic thinking and theories that stress and impairment are primarily deficits in ministers harm both the church and the individual minister. For example, the explanation that a minister's problem is due to his unwillingness to change with the times, when in fact the difficulty stems from the existence of organizational penalties for ministers who introduce innovative ideas or practices, is akin to pointing out the speck in the minister's eye while failing to see the log in the church's eye. This is not to suggest that ministers as individuals do not have shortcomings, but rather to suggest that not all problems with impairment and failures to reenter ministry after treatment need be attributed solely to the minister. There is a need for a comprehensive model to discern the determinants of both health and impairment in those involved in ministry, and to demonstrate that change is probably needed in all four dimensions.

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Making Friends with the Dragon

Women's Leadership in a Time of Transformation

Donna J. Markham, O.P., Ph.D.

Once upon a time, back when the world was new and all, the Dragon lived in the deep. . . . [She] was mother of all, a dark force whose dominion spread from shore to shore. In passion, her awesome power shaped and sculpted the land; a cliff of granite destroyed, a dazzling white beach created. Islands and lagoons, sand bars and channels emerged in response to her restless movement. But with her smile, the seas rippled in delight. Dancing sunbeams made diamonds in the waves, and gentle swells, resonating to her pleasure, caressed the shores of a thousand lands, sending warm tides surging through quiet wetlands, the swampy nursery of all living things.

Then one day, . . . the Dragon was lured from the sea and banished to a cave. For reasons which seemed good at the time, it was decided by the Powers-that-Were to put an end to the restless destruction and creation of the Dragon. . . . Something had to be done, and off to the cave she went.

As things turned out, the sea is still roiled by the children of the Dragon, but the Dragon passes sunless days confined to Stygian gloom. . . . Should despair and anger drive the Dragon to leave her gloomy abode, the way is blocked by a guard at the gate. St. George by name, this fabled knight stands watch with sharpened sword and stout spear, keeping the Dragon under control.

Once, it was said, the Dragon broke loose . . . and the violent passion, compressed in the cave, poured out across the land. . . . For days the Dragon raged until St. George and a hastily assembled band of junior knights corralled the beast.

Quite recently, however, a strange heretical thought has appeared in the land. What if the Dragon were not the terrible beast so horrendously described in song and

fable? Angry for sure, but wouldn't you be angry if you had been locked in a cave for millennia? Perhaps the Dragon is only lonely. What would it mean to make friends with the Dragon?

—Harrison Owen

THE QUESTION

Guard the Gate or Free the Dragon?

This wonderful tale, recounted by Harrison Owen, provides a context for our examination of the task that faces all women leaders in a time of transformation. While the image of the Dragon conjures up all sorts of meanings, I would like to use it as a metaphor for the emergent paradigm that is shaking to the very core all of what we have assumed to be stable. This radically new configuration of our thoughts and perceptions of our world still lacks clear description. Whether we identify it with the reemergence of the feminine or whether we label it "the period of the third mediation," as does Thomas Berry, or give it another, yet-to-be-determined name, is unclear. We do know that our future worldview is likely to be characterized by the development of movements such as ecofeminism, geocentrism, planetary socialism, and creation-centered spirituality. It also seems probable that these movements will increasingly be supported by principles of relationality and community, partnership and cooperation, and eventuated

The unconscious humanly resists change with a tenacity expressed through a myriad of resistant actions, thoughts, and repressed affectivity

only through a profound commitment to contemplation.

Somewhere in the interplay of insights offered by feminists and theoretical physicists, our understanding of the origins of the universe, our place in it, and the way in which we live in it is rapidly exploding. It is no wonder that at a time when our commonly held perceptions of the world, our image of God, our belief in the dominance of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and our anthropocentric view of the order of creation are all in the process of being turned inside-out, shaken to the core, that our lived experience as women religious is also in a state of upheaval. What once was no longer works, and what is yet to be is still to be imagined. The Dragon has begun to venture out of her cave. The new paradigm is upon us. We are living on the edge of a still-unclear, radically new belief system in which we are learning that time has a beginning, that our planet is a living organism, that the human species's first image of the sacred was in all probability that of the goddess, that partnership and collaboration may be more endemic to humans than domination and competition. With all of this as a backdrop, we are called to participate in the concurrent transformation of religious life. Such a transformation is the expression of profound, fundamental shifts in our thought and action that will create irreversible discontinuity in our experience and will necessitate our direct experience of the pain of exile and impasse. I have found Thomas Kuhn's assertion about the importance of community quite provocative. Kuhn believes that discontinuity will be bridged by the continued existence of the community that shares a common history and set of values. It may well be that our emotional balance, as well as our physical survival, will depend through this period of history on our openness to participate in community, to redefine and

recommit ourselves to communitarian life lived with a nonnegotiable fidelity to contemplation.

The new paradigm, like the Dragon, is intimidating and awesome. We must look honestly at how we might be joining George at the gate, using all our energy to keep things the way they are and the Dragon formidably contained. And we must examine how we as individuals and as groups behave when we are confronted with a call to such radical transformation. What strategies might we employ to help ourselves and our congregations cope with the inevitable resistances to such profound conversion and freedom? In other words, what might we do to help set the Dragon free and befriend her? Finally, it is important for us to attend to the things that will help us continue to be courageous, compassionate, and enthusiastic in our ministry as leaders at this point in the history of religious life.

Such diverse fields as the philosophy of science and psychodynamic theory offer insights as we grapple with these important questions. We enter into a period of crisis, when increasing numbers of anomalies appear that no longer fit our existing sets of rules and expectations about the way things ought to be. Much of our experience of religious life today is no longer consistent with the prevailing paradigm. Once-common understandings of terms such as *community*, *mission*, *prayer*, *authority*, and *vows* are no longer clear or adequate to describe our lived reality. In a very real sense, we are living with a crisis in meaning; we are at a point of impasse, and it is terribly uncomfortable. We attempt to cope with such crises in different ways. For some, new ways of thinking and acting are devised as the old standards continue to be challenged and questioned.

Others simply ignore the lack of fit in an effort to preserve the way things are. The depth of resistance to the new often indicates the intensity of the commitment to the paradigm that has shaped and formed us. That is, those of us who have deeply internalized the prevailing religious-life paradigm are likely to find it most difficult to conceive a future far different from the present.

When we look at the consequences of being confronted with such cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual upheaval, we are immediately presented with the incredible hold that anxiety and depression have on our individual and corporate psyches. Standing on the brink of insight or on the precipice of massive reconstructive change, we experience a welling up of intense sadness over what we are leaving behind and a terror at what unknown we are to face. Our unconscious humanly resists change with a tenacity expressed through a myriad of resistant actions, thoughts, and repressed affectivity.

In an effort to provide a context within which we might focus our thinking and our imaging concerning the question at hand—that is, whether to stand guard or to set free—I will address three areas: the

task of transformational leadership, or “taking leave of George”; the management of the blocks to transformation, or “setting the Dragon free”; and, finally, some coping strategies for us as leaders in the midst of transformative change, or “making friends in the swamp.”

TAKING LEAVE OF GEORGE

The Move from Transactional to Transformational Leadership

There is frequently a compelling urge in these times to keep company with George as he stands watch at the entrance to the Dragon’s cave. The primary activity of leaders who make this choice is to preserve order, prevent chaos from being unleashed, and maintain the status quo at whatever cost. Cautiousness, hypervigilance, and preparedness for any sudden deviation from the routine are essential traits for the transactional leader. Such a leadership style is quite effective in the steady phase of development in the life of a group. It is ineffective, however, when a group is faced with revolutionary change; then, a new style of leadership is called for.

Transformational leaders function in the murkiness of the swamp and make friends with the Dragon. In the midst of uncertainty and chaos, they call the group to hope and to a bold vision for the future. They push at the boundaries of how the group has defined itself. They challenge, question, and take risks in intuitive decision making. They catalyze the group to adopt new ways of being that make it most able to respond to the demands of its mission in a rapidly changing world context. They call the group to imagination.

While transactional, or maintenance, leadership sets immediate priorities in light of the existing purposes of the group and allocates resources accordingly, transformational leadership helps the group to articulate a vision for the future that is so compelling it will rouse those who are complacent with the way things are and coalesce those who are restless and agitated. Through the fundamental act of articulating vision, transformational leadership instills hope, awakens wonder, and finally, clears the way for the group to engage in radical corporate action in service of the mission.

When transactional leadership is the predominant mode, leaders are preoccupied with determining how certain functions of the group are going to continue in the face of diminishment. They are captured in the here and now, worried about some unexpected crisis that could upset the fragile balance of things. Such maintenance functioning is often evident in congregational meetings and council meetings in which the agenda is locked into sustaining what is, often to the exclusion of dreaming and planning for what might be. The absence of

visioning and creative planning leaves us exhausted, depressed, demoralized, and disheartened because we know at some intuitive level that efforts toward keeping watch at the gate will ultimately be insufficient to contain the emerging Dragon.

Transformational leadership touches the spirit of the congregation and its deepest-held values, and it articulates vision. Clearly, this is the most critical and vital task of leadership in a time of transformation. The test for the truth of the vision is simple: if no one is willing to put her life on the line to make the vision become a reality, then what has been articulated is not vision. Vision must be so daring and so compelling that it will rouse some from settled comfort and focus the energy of others’ restlessness. Vision taps into our altruism and impels us to act. Such vision emerges from the domain of the Dragon, from our tapping into our feminine heart. It emerges from the depths of our realization that we have reached an impasse, that we are in exile, that the way we are doing things today will not work tomorrow, that things are falling apart. The moment of realizing that past definitions are no longer sufficient to carry us toward a future together is a painful one, fraught with all sorts of feelings of sadness, anger, perhaps despair. Even the most stoic and stouthearted among us experience confusion and emptiness. But it is out of that emptiness that new vision may emerge, heralding the new paradigm through which we are invited to profound personal conversion and communal transformation.

Vision that is not shared is meaningless. The thrust of transformational leadership is to provoke a vision for the future that will result in individuals setting aside personal plans to work for that shared vision in service of the common good. Audacious vision is a key to unlocking the grip of individualism, and it is what calls us to joint communal response in our efforts to address the gap between the values expressed in the gospel and the values that predominate in our culture. It would seem that this would necessarily result in deepened commitment to, and action on behalf of, those who are most oppressed.

Practically, some strategies we may wish to employ as leaders in a time of transformation are to:

- *Tap into the deepest-held values.* Engage membership in the identification of the most-cherished values of the group. This touches the spirit of the group and results in the imaging of the future, the development of vision.
- *Articulate a bold vision and communicate it repeatedly.* Such vision must be magnetic and possible. It must inspire and call forth our congregational “best self.” This is not to say that the vision comes from leadership. It emerges within the community. Leaders hear it, feel it, and articulate it on behalf of the group.

The personal and corporate management of resistance is an essential skill for the transformational leader

- *Invite members to participate in the realization of the vision.* Establish participative processes for strategic planning and procedures for implementation and evaluation.
- *Become comfortable with and adept at managing resistance.* One of the insights we have gained as leaders is that participation of membership enhances ownership. This is surely true, but not the whole answer to the dilemma we face. Often we have been content with thinking we will not have resistance to transformation, to the corporate vision and tasks, if we utilize sufficiently participative decision making and consensual process. Group analysts know all too well that no amount of participation will protect a group from resistance. Resistance is always present in every group. Its intensity and its manifestations simply change. We also know that when resistance is not addressed, it simply becomes more extreme.

SETTING THE DRAGON FREE

The Management of Resistance

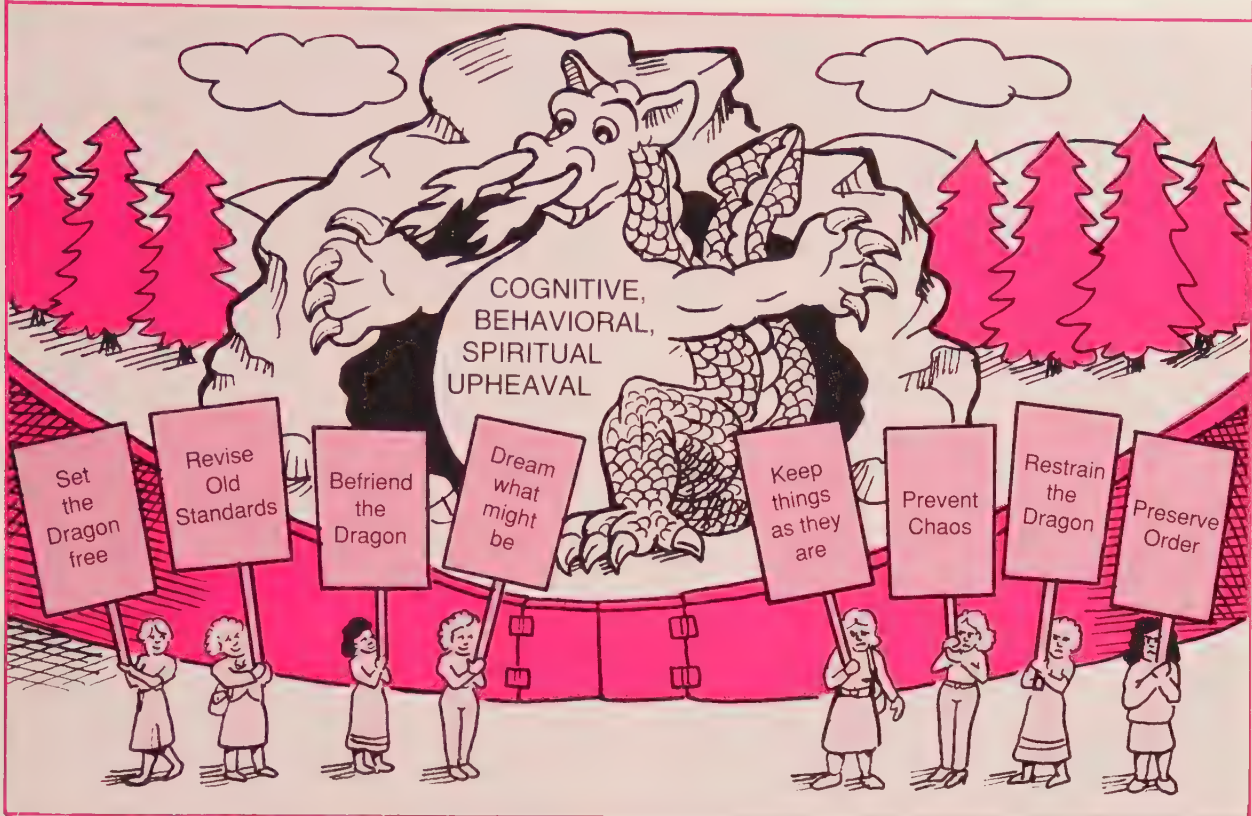
We would be foolhardy to think that unleashing Dragons is simply entertaining amusement. Anxiety, frustration, even terror assault us when we are confronted with that which is unknown, awesome, and beyond our control. We attempt to bind the anxiety by engaging in various unconscious defensive maneuvers designed to protect us from the onslaught of the unknown. These unconscious resistances serve as an apparent protection for any individual or group faced with rules-shattering change. The initial protective function of resistance, when left unaddressed, will erode and inevitably result in the individual's or the group's becoming entrenched, unable to adapt, and ultimately unable to function in a changing world.

Faced with the enormity of turmoil and ambiguity that this era is generating, it is to be expected that we, as well as our congregations, will engage in numerous resistant behaviors in an effort to contain our anxiety over the emergence of the unknown, to remain in the darkness of impasse. The personal and corporate management of resistance is an essential skill for the transformational leader. In order to work through resistance, we must be able to recognize its presence, its purpose, its origins, and the consequences of its operation in the life of our congregations. The body of literature on organizational transformation is replete with statements about the pervasiveness of resistance in a time of change. Some authors cursorily cite ways in which resistance operates in an organization. Their inattention to the topic of the management of resistance in the literature on transformational leadership and organizational change suggests that the power of this complex dynamic has not been sufficiently recognized. My personal conviction is that managing resistance is one of the most essential functions of leadership in a time of such comprehensive upheaval. To explore how resistance can be worked through, I have relied on and developed a fundamental analytic theory.

Classically, resistance to change can be identified through the unconscious deployment of defenses such as isolation, projection, splitting, undoing, denial, rigidity, and depression. Anxiety typically serves as an overarching indication of resistance at work. All resistances are directed toward making us feel safer and more protected. In our case, the more the emergence of a new world order comes into our awareness and is experienced as a source of threat to our present experience, the more anxious we become and the more adamantly we will attempt to fortify ourselves against the perceived dangers arising from it.

Consider some manifestations of unconscious resistance to transformation at work within our congregations. Isolation is a form of resistance that is called by many names. Its purpose is to interfere with the ability of the group to engage corporately in the process of transformation. Individualism represents a form of this defense. Unconsciously aware that groups with competent leadership and facilitation are likely to take greater risks than any individual will by herself (the risky-shift phenomenon), an individual chooses cathexis in personal projects, security, and affective needs to safeguard against the power of common action toward radical change. The phenomenon of "cocooning" creates an existence of apparent self-sufficiency, self-absorption, and comfort in which only the thinnest of threads may connect otherwise isolated individuals. Any concerted effort toward fashioning a corporate vision and engaging in the strategies to achieve it becomes impossible. Isolation is evident in the marginalization of members and in the

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reluctance and malaise they exhibit in responding to corporate tasks. Like all resistances, cocooning is unconscious and has at its root the control of extreme anxiety, which the process of transformation generates.

Projection refers to the attribution of an unwanted or dangerous desire, thought, or feeling to another, with the unwanted material felt as coming back against the originating person or group itself. In other words, threatening material is externalized and experienced as coming from an outside source. The person or group is thus able to rid self of ownership of something that will likely cause disruption or pain. Examples of projection are evident, for example, in the manner in which the demands of chapter enactments are displaced onto an abstract entity such as the congregation or onto leadership. Telegraphed statements may sound like, "Now what do they want from us? They can't expect me to do that." Concurrent feelings often include anger and blame. If we understand projection as a form of resistance arising from underlying fear of the consequences of participating in the vision expressed in the chapter material, we can get a clearer sense of how to manage this apparent lack of ownership. What we are really hearing is "I am irritated and angry with myself for being so afraid to engage in this. I blame myself for my lack

of courage." In an attempt to be rid of such uncomfortable feelings and thoughts, the individual or the group projects responsibility onto another entity. Anger and blame effectively block participation in the transformative vision. We can't see when we're blind with rage.

Closely related to isolation and projection is the use of splitting, in which the threatening aspects of assuming responsibility for the vision are projected onto someone else, and the gratifying dimensions are retained by the self. The recipient of the threatening, demanding elements becomes the container for all that is "bad," and the self becomes identified with what is "good." The "bad" and threatening is effectively split off from contact with the "good" self and is prevented from having any effect on, or emotional contact with, that self. Clearly, such resistant behavior can have extremely divisive consequences for a congregation. Splitting dynamics, left unchecked, can actually destroy group cohesion to such an extent that the congregation is in danger of dissolution. The emotional fallout on leaders can be profound as they experience themselves as the personifications of the perceived threat.

Doing and undoing represents another familiar mode of blocking the process of transformation. While aware that change needs to occur, the group becomes paralyzed, unable to move forward, be-

Depression frequently blocks a group's energy to address the future

cause it insidiously and cleverly “undoes” whatever actions it has initiated to clear the way for radical change. For example, a decision is made to articulate a preferred future for the congregation—clearly a step forward. But it is thwarted, undone, by circular discussions on process, methodology, the implications and need for further study, and debates about facilitators and, ultimately, about the efficacy of the whole idea. Meanwhile, in the rest of the congregational arena, a business-as-usual approach to daily life is maintained, and the group is distracted from dealing with the future. Anxiety has been sufficiently bound by this ritual of doing and undoing, and the group continues to live with the illusion that everything is relatively under control.

Undoing is evident in yet another way through the frantic activity of the group: whatever has been accomplished in one area is undone by the group's addiction to action. Chronic fatigue or even illness sets in, and the group is unable to take delight in the wonder of what it had done that could have opened the way to the future.

Denial represents the most primitive, and probably the most dangerous, of our defenses against transformation, since it results in a group's becoming irrelevant in relation to its mission in the world. Denial assures the diminishment of life and the deprivation of a future. It is a desperate attempt to protect the way things are by negating the existence of any difficulties with the present mode of functioning. Everything feels fine. For example, denying any need for refounding, the group engages in heroics as it attempts to shore up its present mode of life with more members. It lowers its expectations, obfuscates its charism, and makes its boundaries so permeable that they no longer truly exist. All the while, it deceives itself into thinking it is very forward-thinking, since it has become so inclusive. What the group does not

realize is that it has insured an increase of attrition and that with little sense of identity it will die more rapidly. When denial is in operation, the Dragon in her cave does not even exist. Indeed, the very presence of the cave is perceived as an anomaly.

Rigidity and literalism represent further attempts to resist the impact of transformation. These behaviors are especially apparent in groups of educated perfectionists, who find it rattling to make mistakes and disconcerting to manage messes. In an attempt to contain the massive amounts of anxiety that the advent of change generates, the group spends time designing tighter systems of control. Hours are given to examining how the group might better proceed in the here and now. Operational procedures are reviewed and detailed extensively. The extreme adherence to rules and procedures is indicative of the need to keep things under control. In this way, the imminent chaos and its messiness are avoided by fixing up and preserving the old manner of addressing problems. Such rigidity bespeaks a futile attempt to control the radically shifting environment as internal structures are crumbling. While seeking to protect the group from profound redefinition, rigidity and literalism serve to snuff out the spirit of the group. A congregation's spirit exists primarily in the dynamism of the processes it undertakes as it struggles to mend the rift between our culture and the values expressed in the gospel. The spirit does not reside in those forms we create along the way. Depression, manifested in corporate malaise, complacency, low morale, and loss of a sense of meaning and worth, frequently blocks a group's energy to address the future. Phrases like “we're aging,” “no energy,” “too involved in ministry,” “too tired,” “already taken my turn” hint at depressive resistance. The phenomenon of the settled and satisfied reflects the weariness of the corporate spirit. It speaks to our having lost heart and meaning. Such a loss of spirit results in the obviation of creativity and blocks the open spaces where imagination and visions happen.

While the visioning process is the first step toward preparing our congregations to enter into the future, we must work to remove these weighty blocks from the entrance to the cave so the Dragon may be set free. The interpretation and management of resistance is predicated on our recognition of its presence. While giving up resistances can expose us to danger and threats far greater than our discomfort with the present, it can also result in profound freedom. A deceptively simple schema may prove helpful as we try to help ourselves and our congregations work through resistance.

Three aspects of any resistant behavior must be explored if the resistance is to be resolved: the manner in which the resistance is apparent, the possible reasons such resistance might be occurring now, and what the implications would be for the life of the group if the resistant behavior were to continue. These three elements can be identified

as the mode, motive, and meaning. In the interpretation of resistance, it frequently is the task of leadership to identify the presence of resistance and to name it for the group. Once the mode has been identified—that is, once an objective description of the group's behavior has been articulated—discussion should explore the possible reasons that this behavior is in full force at this point in the group's history. Such dialogic analysis is often most successfully undertaken with the assistance of a facilitator. This enables all to engage in the discussion and militates against displacement of responsibility onto leadership. Finally, in order for resistance to be resolved effectively, a discussion of the expected outcomes needs to take place to help deter the group from continuing in its resistant mode. Frequently the simple bringing to consciousness of the resistant behavior will free the group to move ahead. It is essential, however, that the process be carried out in its entirety.

Our reluctance to deal with resistance may be related to the fear that to do so sounds critical or punitive. If we understand that resistance is not deliberate but rather a human dynamic, and that all of us are resistant in some way or another, we may be able to remove the judgmental tone from it. To neglect attending to it is far too dangerous.

MAKING FRIENDS IN THE SWAMP

Coping Skills for Transformational Leaders

Thriving in the swamp can be tricky business, even if Dragons are your friends. It is apparent to me that if we are to be able to engage in the task of visioning, of consequent strategic planning, evaluation, and clearing away the blocks that rest at the gate, we must give some attention to the personal care of self. The scope of the work, along with the sense that time is running out, can seduce us into endless action without taking adequate time for reflection and rest.

In a recently completed longitudinal study that followed five thousand helping professionals representing a variety of fields over a ten-year period, some fascinating insights emerged. The researchers were primarily concerned with what happens to people who spend hour after hour, day after day, exposed to physical, psychological, and social problems and who are expected to be both administratively skilled and personally concerned.

Nearly all of these people began their work with a high level of motivation. The researchers found that those who worked in a stressful environment exhibited symptoms of physical depletion, chronic fatigue, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, increased negative self-concepts and negative attitudes, and feelings of guilt, inadequacy, incompetence, and failure. Persons who started out filled

with idealism and empathy ended up resenting their work and their coworkers. On the other hand, those who worked within a supportive environment achieved high performance, felt strengthened in their initial motivation, and experienced continued energy and enthusiasm.

The study indicated that the key components of a supportive environment are autonomy, variety, sensitivity to quantitative and qualitative overload, a feeling of the significance of the work, opportunities for actualization and growth, architectural structure and space that facilitate creativity, and appropriate levels of interaction (provision for the social dimension).

Those of us who will handle leadership well in a time of transformation are likely to be those of us who are highly relational and who also have the capacity to grapple with an extraordinarily ambiguous task that is probably going to be left unfinished. Clinical practice testifies to the fact that people with this combination of gifts run a high risk of burnout and depression. This underscores the importance of mutual support within our leadership.

Attention to the environment and to peer support, as well as social and intellectual stimulation, will assist us in keeping in touch with the inspired places within, where dreams continue to happen. Beyond this, however, emancipative possibilities for our future—setting the Dragon free—will be conceived only in our reaching out for God in this time of broken myth and shattered symbol. It is from the depth of this contemplative act that transformation will occur. And, after all, as Harrison Owen writes in *Leadership Is*, we know that “nothing of importance can go on until the Dragon dances.”

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The Compulsive Personality and Religion

Richard P. Vaughan, S.J., Ph.D.

To some degree, personality sets the way we think, feel, and act. It is something that influences just about everything we do. Thus, it should not be surprising that the type of personality we have determines how we relate to God and neighbor, and how we worship and pray.

The term *personality* has several meanings, depending on the theorist one follows. For example, the meaning of personality differs for Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Carl Rogers. After a study of some fifty definitions of personality, Gordon Allport proposed a global definition that encompasses a number of different theories; this is the one we shall use in this article. According to Allport, personality is a "dynamic organization within an individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his or her characteristic behavior and thought." In other words, personality is a real, motivating entity within an individual that causes him or her to think, feel, and act in a unique way. It is something that unifies the psychological and the physical aspects of our being so that we react to the world about us in a way that is characteristic of ourselves. For example, the person with an outgoing, social personality thinks, feels, and acts quite differently from a solitary, introverted person.

THE COMPULSIVE PERSONALITY

The *Dictionary of Psychology* defines the compulsive person as "an individual who is excessively orderly, rigid, and pedantic." He or she gives pri-

ority to thinking over feeling, and control over spontaneity. Compulsive people tend to be analytical and feel comfortable when they are in complete control of themselves and the situation in which they find themselves. They are serious, cautious, and deliberate, with little or no sense of humor. They approach daily life in a rational, logical way at the expense of feelings and intuition. In addition, compulsives are systematic, orderly, and neat. They are noted for having clean, orderly homes and offices. For example, if a compulsive has papers on his or her desk, those papers are stacked in neat piles. Everything has its proper place and is usually found there. The disorder of other people is unsettling. A cluttered or dirty home annoys the compulsive.

Compulsive people approach problems by analyzing them and pay close attention to details. They are most comfortable in structured situations and adhere rigidly to their usual way of acting. When thrown into a situation in which they cannot follow their customary way of acting or in which they lose control, compulsives become uneasy and sometimes confused. They are analytic at the expense of creativity, which usually plays a minor role in their lives. Compulsive people lead rigidly scheduled lives. Any unforeseen need to move away from the established schedule can throw the compulsive off balance. Compulsives are invariably on time for appointments and apologize profusely when late.

People with this type of personality are wedded to their work. Being productive is more important

than having friends or a social life. They tend to value themselves by how much work they do and how well they do it rather than by how many friends they have or their ability to fit into the social scene. Because compulsive people tend to be wedded to their work, they are willing to work overtime and find it hard to relax and take time out for recreation. Since they frequently consider relaxation and recreation to be a waste of time, they often forgo the opportunity to take a vacation. Compulsives demand the best of themselves; anything less than the best is unacceptable. They often impose this same standard on the members of their families, their friends, and their fellow workers.

MORALITY OF COMPULSIVES

Compulsive people are very conscious of moral values and may be overly sensitive to what is right or wrong. Absolute honesty and strict justice are virtues they demand of themselves and others. At times they may overreact when treated unjustly or dishonestly. Injustice in the world community or the dishonesty of a political figure can provoke their anger far beyond the expected.

In their style of living they are frugal and do not part easily with money or possessions. Compulsives are bargain hunters and tend to hoard items they might need in the future. Generosity with money is not usually one of their key virtues; however, compulsives can be very generous in donating their time.

Compulsives fall within the range of normal and are the healthy cousins of people who suffer from an obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. Few have all the characteristics mentioned above, but all have a sufficient number to fit the definition of a compulsive personality. The following case is an example of a compulsive personality.

THE ACCOUNTANT

Ted, a 42-year-old accountant who was very active in his parish, came to see one of the priests and asked about getting spiritual direction, which he had heard about through a friend who found spiritual direction very helpful. When asked what he hoped to gain from spiritual direction, he responded that he was not quite sure what spiritual direction was, but suggested that he might learn how to pray better as a consequence of direction.

Ted was often seen at daily mass. He taught in the religious education program and was on the parish council. The pastor had relied on his organizational skills on a number of occasions. Even though he was obviously overworked, Ted was always generous in taking on new projects when asked.

At his accounting firm Ted was highly respected as being unusually competent and reliable. In his dealings with the other members of the firm he was

Compulsives take literally the scriptural admonition “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”

serious and somewhat distant, but he was considered the one to consult when a problem arose that others could not solve.

A couple of years ago Ted's wife left him and their two sons, aged 10 and 12, to live with her aging parents. He had thought that he and his wife had a relatively happy marriage and could not understand why she left. They had a beautiful home in one of the better sections of the city, and he earned a large salary. Since she went to live with her parents, he had to care for the house and the two boys when he returned from work, but this was nothing new for him: for years he had taken care of much of the housework, done the marketing, and supervised the boys' activities. He considered his wife's housekeeping abominable. In his view she was sloppy, extravagant, and much too easy on their sons. When they lived together Ted constantly berated his wife for what he considered her shortcomings. He was excessively strict with his sons, expected very much of them, and never seemed satisfied with anything they did, whether at school or at home. He was very much involved in their activities both inside and outside the home, overly critical, and seldom complimented them. Much of the time he seemed to be angry about something they did, as he was with his wife when they lived together. He was the scoutmaster of the boys' local troop and regularly attended their Little League games, where he was a sidewalk coach.

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Perfectionistic, orderly, rigid, intellectual, service-oriented—all are characteristics of the compulsive in terms of spirituality and the practice of religion. Compulsives take literally the scriptural admonition “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,” which shows up in their moral behavior

and pursuit of virtue. Compulsives have a tendency to be overly sensitive to any thought, attitude, or action that might be wrong. They sometimes see serious sin where there is simply a manifestation of human weakness or a failure to be perfect. They must be absolutely honest in their dealings with other people. For instance, a woman with a compulsive personality would be loath to tell a salesman that her husband is not at home when he is actually watching television in the back room and does not want to see the salesman. God's commandments and the commandments of the church are to be followed exactly, with few if any exceptions. Such a rigid code of behavior causes compulsives to feel guilty much of the time because they are constantly falling short of what they think God expects of them. This often undermines their relationship with God, whom they look upon as a God of justice rather than a God of love.

The characteristic of orderliness shows up in a compulsive's way of worshiping God and practicing his or her religion. The prayer of the person with a compulsive personality may be limited to saying a series of formal prayers that were learned in childhood, such as the Lord's Prayer or the Act of Contrition, or to reading prayers from a prayer book. Daily repetition of these prayers often plays a minor role in the compulsive's spirituality. For compulsive people spontaneous prayer, such as that which happens in shared prayer, is most difficult and often distasteful. If the compulsive person has a more developed prayer life, meditation on a specific subject or reflection on scripture is the practice of choice, rather than centering or contemplation. For some compulsives prayer that calls for the use of the imagination or imagery is extremely difficult or even impossible, and thus some of the newer and more spontaneous forms of prayer are not attractive. Compulsives need to feel in control of the situation in which they find themselves. With the more spontaneous forms of prayer they cannot have the degree of control they need. Their prayer is frequently more intellectual than affective, and while it may produce a number of insights, it is short on affectivity.

Regular attendance at established church services, such as masses or novenas, plays a vital role in the compulsive's spiritual life. Some compulsives attend mass daily and feel guilty if they miss a day every so often. Changes in the church's liturgical practices have not set well with a number of compulsive people. They prefer the old to the new, and long for the Latin mass of the pre-Vatican era, when they say they could really pray without being distracted by the guitar-playing, singing, and hand-shaking done at today's mass. For some compulsives any celebration of mass that deviates from the traditional norms causes much distress. Ritual, routine, and regularity play essential roles in the compulsive's spirituality and religious practice.

SERVICE OF GOD

Worshiping God through service is another component of the compulsive person's spirituality. Many compulsives have unusual analytical and organizational skills, which they put to use by organizing church projects or serving on committees. They find serving God through the use of their abilities more satisfying than participating in retreat days with group discussions or joint prayer sessions, at which they are usually ill at ease.

DIRECTION AND COUNSELING

Understanding and accepting the personality of an individual and then building on the positive features of his or her personality is essential to any kind of effective spiritual direction or counseling, which means that the director or counselor tries to help the person focus on his or her assets and then make use of these rather than focus on limitations he or she should change. The compulsive personality manifests many outstanding personality characteristics that can be used in developing prayer and a service-oriented life. It is not helpful to try to persuade compulsives to adapt a mode of spirituality that is foreign to their personality type. Compulsives have to pray and serve God and his people according to their given personalities. They may manifest their love of God and neighbor differently from persons of other personality types, but their way is no less efficacious. The work of the spiritual director or counselor is to bring out the best in the person with a compulsive personality, which may at times call for modifying some characteristics so as to increase the effectiveness of others.

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Reluctance in Spiritual Direction

James M. Keegan, S.J.

Recently, a popular songwriter and musician was being interviewed on public radio by a woman quite skilled at drawing out and listening to the man's remarks. He talked about his father's influence on his career, and before he knew it, he was saying that the creative tension in his songs reflects his ambivalent feelings about his father. He seemed to be discovering this and its implications as he spoke, and to be enjoying the exploration as well. Toward the end of the interview the musician said, "The center of my life, really, is my relationship with God." The interviewer replied, "Oh! . . . Do you enjoy composing for movies?"

The change of subject and tone leapt off the airwaves and landed like a cat on the floor beside me. What had happened to her when he said "God"? Did she feel this was too private for public consumption, even though the interviewee seemed ready to go on? Was she afraid he would preach or have more to say than airtime allowed? Or did she imagine that asking him to elaborate would beget only dead air? Was she afraid of these troubling waters, afraid she might walk away disturbed? Or did she just not hear what he had said?

The cat on the floor is, of course, an old familiar to spiritual directors and those who try to help them in supervision. There is probably no more frequent move in spiritual direction than the 180-degree lateral deflection when a directee mentions encountering God. Sometimes the change of subject is as blunt as it was on the radio. Often the

directee's mention of God is heard and acknowledged, and sometimes it hovers about the conversation for a few minutes before it disappears. Noticing and helping a person to explore a specific religious experience is not only centrally important to contemplative spiritual direction; it also seems one of the most difficult things to do. Why?

In responding to a supervisor's question, "What do you think accounts for your moving away from this person's experience of God?" spiritual directors—especially beginning directors—often have one or all of the following reactions:

- 1) "That's holy ground; I didn't want to invade it."
- 2) "I knew that God was involved here, and I guess that was too much for me."
- 3) "The person didn't say any more than that, and I thought that was all there was to it."
- 4) "I know I missed it. I see how it disappeared, but I don't know what to do about it. When will I ever learn how to do this?"

A reverent and critical look at these four responses may help spiritual directors approach others' religious experience with that difficult combination of respect and inquiry that communicates, "I am interested in you and want to understand."

Intruding on Another's Holy Ground. Prayer is certainly among the most individual and interior of human activities. Not only does it occur in the

secret corners and dark passages of our hearts, but it often touches interiors we have ourselves not yet discovered. Furthermore, prayer takes two: it is a relationship—intimate, close, and as one opens to the touch of the Spirit, more delicately personal than most human relationships. Another is already present in our secret places. In this respect, prayer commands a silence like that which surrounds the sexual intimacies of a husband and wife. Anyone who would broadcast such experience indiscriminately or who would invite the general public to wander into it at will would certainly seem indiscreet.

The reality of holy ground pervades the scriptures, from the formless void of Genesis 1:1 to the tree of life and the holy city at the end of the Book of Revelation. Where God chooses to be revealed, people set up rocks of remembrance, shrines, "three tents," or a holy of holies that can be entered only by those ordained to enter. It is no wonder that when a director begins to speak about God entering her or his life in a concrete time and place, the director may decide to come no nearer.

And yet our best scriptural and dogmatic theology has always insisted that there is no revelation of God that is strictly private. The God of the scriptures is never found imparting secrets to be kept "between us." Revelation, even personal mystical revelation to an individual, is given as a grace for the church as well as for the individual. Revelation is always public in that sense.

The third chapter of the Book of Exodus tells the great story of Moses' prophetic call. While watching the flock of his father-in-law, Moses encounters God in the experience of seeing a bush that is on fire but not burning up—a wonderful symbol of what Moses himself will become as he dares to attend to his experience of God. God calls him by name, and in a bold moment of intimacy, Moses asks God's name as well. In that moment Moses is perhaps as close to God as any human being had ever come. It seems, in fact, that he has come as close as possible: he can only take off his shoes and be there, on holy ground. The encounter turns even more personal as God begins to unburden to Moses the pain and frustration that come from God's seeing the Israelites in slavery. Moses reacts with candor as God asks, and empowers him, to go to Pharaoh. It is a very intimate and personal, but not private, event.

This encounter with God, like many later in Moses' life, is intended for the people. We have the story because it was spoken, passed on. Even when God meets Moses on Sinai (Exodus 19 and 20), replete with smoke and flame and ample warning to the people not to approach the mountain, the encounter is for the people: from it come the Decalogue, the Code of the Covenant, and the foundation of the Law. It is not a private event.

In the later history of Israel, the prophets stand on the solid ground of their personal religious

experiences. Isaiah's urgent bad news for Judah and Jerusalem, for instance, has authority because he is willing to speak clearly and in detail about the experience of being called by God, which underlies his message (Isa. 6). Jeremiah's call (Jer. 1) and his visions, his "hearing God" at the potter's house (Jer. 18), Ezekiel's being asked by God to eat the scroll God offered him (Ezek. 3) and his strange vision of the four living creatures (Ezek. 1) are intensely personal experiences of God acting in a human life. But they must be spoken, told to others, because they are for the people, not simply for the consolation of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The central event of the New Testament, the death and resurrection of Jesus, remains for Christians the strongest reason for the need to speak about religious experience. Where some saw the execution of a political criminal, others saw the intervention of God, and they felt impelled to speak this good news. When they meet the risen Christ, the disciples run immediately to the assembly to tell the others what has happened to them.

In one of the most moving and personal scenes in scripture, Jesus meets Mary outside the tomb (John 20:10–18), speaks her name, and reveals himself to her. But this story has to be spoken, not simply held onto: "Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her." In Luke's account (Luke 24:13–35), the two disciples who have met the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus "returned at once to Jerusalem. . . . Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread." Matthew has the women who discover the empty tomb and the message of the angel "afraid yet filled with joy," running "to tell his disciples." Only in Mark is the story kept private: it is not because of the holiness of their experience that the women do not speak of it, but because they are afraid (Mark 16:8). This kind of experience seems to carry within itself a need to be shared with others who can appreciate it. Indeed, right through to the intensely personal visions of St. John on the Island of Patmos, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, scripture is a record of men and women who seem on fire to speak to others of events that take place in their most personal moments, on their holiest ground.

People who pray also experience God personally and intimately, and each must walk this ground unaccompanied. They do not ask a director to come before God with them, but to hear what happens when they come before God. Talking about that experience in some detail with a skilled director can help people not only to acknowledge, value, and appropriate the experience, but often to notice more about God's action and its ripples into other circles of their lives. They may begin to see how the gift of their personal prayer can help the church, as

their relationship with God develops and they begin to make choices and to take action because of it.

If the director has been clear about the scope and purpose of direction, most people will know that a chief concern of the meeting will be conversation about their prayer. Even with all the difficulties in articulation that come with exploring new territory, as well as the hesitations and embarrassments that attend real self-disclosure, directees often seem more willing to speak of their experience of God than directors are to hear about it. Why?

Meeting God Oneself. Shying away from holy ground may be a prudent thing to do. Scripture insists that it is deadly to meet the living God, and we know instinctively the wisdom of Sinai's smoke and warnings: meeting God means trouble. Change, growth, more trekking, responsibility for the slaves: these are in the wind around the holy mountain, and we know it. The temptation is to settle down with our golden calves and household gods rather than to await the revelation of this supremely free God.

Some courageous directors acknowledge that recognizing religious experience sends them heading in the other direction because they are afraid. Helping a directee explore an encounter with God may put me face-to-face with God myself. My prayer, or my lack of prayer, may be challenged by what I hear. My commitment to the cries of the poor, whom God hears, may seem paltry and guilt-ridden.

Directors may fear religious experience because they are not familiar with the God they will meet there. Experience as a staff member of three very different internship programs for the development of spiritual directors has convinced me that time spent helping new directors to pray contemplatively and talk over that experience is time well used. If a director is not at home with "wasting" hours contemplatively, or is not personally aware of the ways one can meet God in such contemplation, neither books and articles nor supervisory harangues will enable him or her to enter holy ground with a directee. Furthermore, the director's own background in receiving spiritual direction will influence his or her practice of the art. For many, direction has been focused not on contemplative encounters with God but on problem solving, or the integration of life issues, or a kind of pastoral counseling. It is no wonder that when a directee says, "God seemed very eager to speak to me," a director may be tempted to reply, "Oh! . . . Do you enjoy composing for movies?"

Encountering God in another's experience can be unsettling. I may not like the God I meet, a God who may not take care of my directee's problems or who will not let him or her off the hook. A man (let's call him Francis) who was convinced of God's

Directors may fear religious experience because they are not familiar with the God they will meet there

desire to heal people worked in direction with a woman (we'll call her Maura) who had breast cancer. Despite her prayerful pleas and work with creative imagination, the malignancy spread and the outlook was grim. Francis, her director, was aware that she was terminally ill and felt he could best help her by encouraging her to bring her suffering and her feelings about it to God. A verbatim account of one of their conversations, however, revealed that God had other thoughts.

Maura told her director that when she prayed she seemed to hear God saying to her, "I'm helpless here, too. I will be with you." When Francis replied, "What happened then?" Maura said, "Well, nothing much. I kept reading the psalm over and over." That was the end of the exploration of this particular experience.

When I asked Francis about this in supervision, he remembered that Maura had often spoken of hearing God this way and that the message always seemed the same: "I'm helpless here, too. I will be with you." Francis would skip over it each time because he could not imagine God helpless over this woman's cancer. In a way, he did not even hear it. In fact, he was scared to death of such a God because throughout his life he had been made responsible for other people's well-being and good feelings. How could God be helpless if Francis himself felt responsible? A God who would simply be with him, as helpless as Jesus on the cross, was not enough. Exploring Maura's religious experience made Francis face his anger and grief at feeling abandoned by God and eventually led him to a crisis of his own spirit.

When a director balks at religious experience because he or she knows that God is present, we have to respect the instinct. For if God is indeed in the encounter between director and directee, then God is working for the salvation and growth of the

Like sex, prayer is not something many of us are accustomed to talking about in much detail or with much ease

director, too. This is a church encounter, sacramental in a way. As a minister may hide behind liturgical books and rubrics, so a director may deflect the action of God from himself or herself with the skills and craft he or she has learned. But it remains that the director is not the one in charge here. Despite the serious need for professional distance, the director is implicated in the directee's experience of God: it will touch the director too if it is real. Allowing that while remaining a separate, congruent helper is a difficult balancing act.

Not Looking Beyond the Surface. Spiritual directors in supervision often stare in amazement at supervisors who ask "what else" a directee said about a particular experience in prayer. What else is there to say once a person has spoken about what happened when he or she prayed? In this section I would like to look at the nature of religious experience itself; in the final section I will address attitudes in the director that facilitate or impede the exploration of this experience.

Prayer, as we have said, is among the most intimate events of our lives. Like sex, prayer is not something many of us are accustomed to talking about in much detail or with much ease. Because our religious culture has privatized intimacy, we don't have an adult vocabulary for such things as prayer or sex; lacking the words, we don't speak about them.

It is understandable that people beginning spiritual direction tend to more readily talk about other things when such interior dialogue is called for. They might say "Not much happened" or shy away from speaking in depth about their prayer, and so give the impression that there is no more to say. They might sum up their experience and move on to another subject: "It was okay; I'm not sure what I got out of it, but I felt glad I had prayed. God

isn't changing my bad habits very fast, though." It is also understandable that a director might feel the directees' reticence or struggle to articulate, and interpret it as a sign that enough has been said. Often it comes as a relief to the director, who can claim, "It felt like holy ground, and I didn't want to invade it!" In the following imagined conversation, the director obtains such relief:

"I'd been reading Isaiah 43," said Jeanne, "that part where God says something like 'I've done all these things for you and I will protect you . . . because you are honored in my sight and I love you.' That really caught me."

Rose, her director, responds, "Those words spoke to you."

"Yeah, they were very strong. It was as if God were saying it to me himself."

"As if God were speaking to you."

"That's right. It was very moving. I was really touched, and I even remember tears coming to my eyes—and you know I don't cry very easily."

Rose is surprised at the flush of emotion in Jeanne's face. "That seems like quite a moment. What happened then?"

Jeanne takes a breath. "Well, I just said thank you and . . . well, when I finished I felt very peaceful."

Rose catches a second wind: "Did the peace last?" she asks. Their conversation focuses for a while on the effects of Jeanne's prayer, but the experience itself never comes up again.

We do not hesitate to name the prayerful events in the life of Christ "mysteries" because we know that in them, God has drawn close to human beings and revealed to us something of the nature of God's self. They are inexhaustible events that have been contemplated by Christians with fresh eyes for two thousand years. Mystery, in this religious sense, does not mean something unknowable or untouchable; quite the reverse. Mystery here refers to an event that invites touching and handling and reverent inquiry, an event so rich that it can never be fully understood but that yields up new treasure to every contemplative searcher.

Jeanne's prayer may not be mystery, like the events of Christ's life, but I suggest that it participates in the same grace and may best be approached in the same way—as Jeanne's scripture. For it may well be that in her contemplation of Isaiah 43, God has drawn close to human life and has been revealed again as God.

Much of our experience remains unconscious until we are helped to look at it reverently. Rather than being left wondering what on earth Rose is searching for with her questions, Jeanne could be helped to notice in her prayer far more than she had seen before she explored it. Real religious experience keeps unfolding itself because it occurs in the encounter of two mysterious beings. In it the unfathomable God and the praying person are

revealed to one another, and there is always more to notice. Simple reporting of the event does not begin to unearth the treasures it may disclose, nor does much conversation about its effects (like peace or gratitude) substitute for exploring the event itself. Furthermore, if the experience is real, it will not be simply an isolated event between Jeanne and God. The more she looks, the more she may find that it touches other relationships and issues in her life, that it “goes deep,” perhaps connecting her with a larger world and church.

These depths can be awesome, and potentially troubling, too. A director may unconsciously sense their nearness and take the first exit to relief. Let us imagine how the conversation between Jeanne and Rose might go if Rose were to enter the mystery ever so slightly.

Rose notices Jeanne’s flush of emotion as she says, “That’s right. It was very moving. I was really touched, and I even remember tears coming to my eyes—and you know I don’t cry very easily.”

Rose sits quietly for a moment, not sure what to say. Jeanne continues, “God really was speaking to me.” She looks up at Rose.

“God told you that all these things had been done for you, and that you are protected because you are loved. And God was really speaking to *you*, not just in general.

“That’s right. Isn’t that remarkable!”

Rose decides to ask what was in Jeanne’s mind. “Is that the way you heard it, just the way you said it to me, kind of straightforward?”

Jeanne stops for a moment. “Well, no, it wasn’t. It didn’t seem like that, factual . . . and it wasn’t soft—you know, mushy—as the words might make you think. It was more like . . . well, urgent.”

“Urgent?”

“Yes. I wouldn’t have expected that, and I didn’t notice it till you asked me, but it felt as if God really wanted me to believe what was being said. It wasn’t just for good feelings, but as if God had something in mind and really wanted me to hear it.”

Jeanne has noticed a great deal about her experience that was not conscious when she started. She is aware of having heard not just words but a tone of voice that implied something for her. God seems to have feelings about Jeanne, and even a need to be heard. This is, of course, only the start of the exploration that could develop from Jeanne’s prayer. She might, with help, continue to look at God and God’s action as well as at herself; she might discover that there was even more to the simple event and that she wants to speak to God about what she has noticed. She may be moving into the mystery of God being revealed in her own life.

Depths like these are not only daunting but also fascinating and appealing. Mystery makes us want to come closer. What is it, then, that often captures

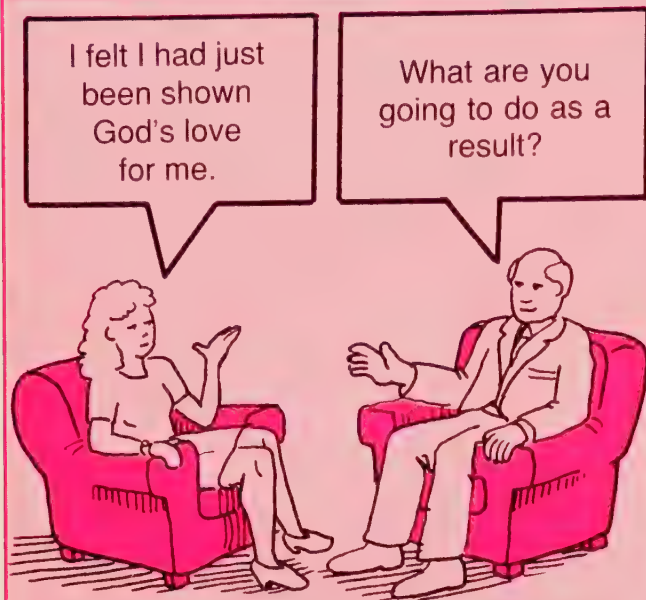
Staying with another’s experience demands an engaged, critical, and contemplative posture before that person

the attention of spiritual directors and moves them away from exploring religious experience?

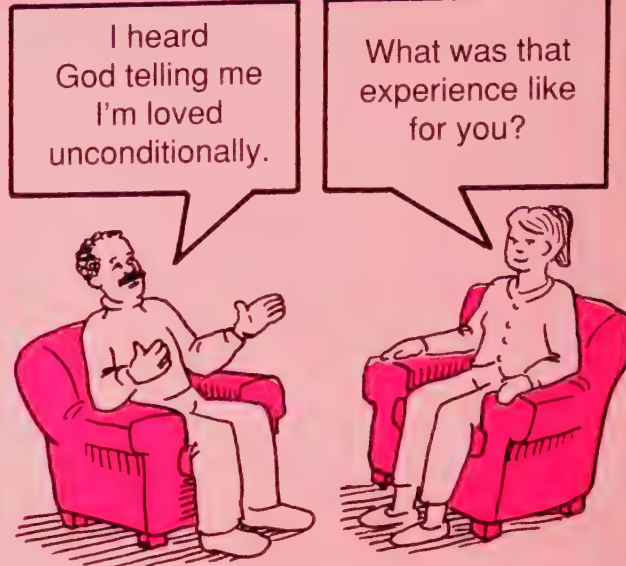
Being Interested in Something Else. In some kinds of spiritual direction, things quite different from what we have been describing here may occur because religious experience is not the focus. But when a director is convinced of the value of helping others to explore their prayer, it is interesting to note, from a supervisory viewpoint, how long it usually takes before the director becomes comfortable with actually doing that. Frequently he or she will ask the supervisor about the right questions to ask, a more engaging way to stay with the director’s experience, or how the supervisor would proceed. While skills and technique are important in this work, they are not the heart of the issue. Staying with another’s experience demands an engaged, critical, and contemplative posture before that person; it demands interest in his or her experience. Many directors seem to be interested in something else.

While it may not be the most significant reason that directors shy away from religious experience, the need to see progress and results seems, in practice, to be the most persistent. Questions like “What am I doing wrong here?” need to be asked in supervision, but they need not be answered too readily. Should the supervisor respond, “Let’s look at what’s behind your question,” both the supervisor and the supervisee might discover that they, like most of us, are imbued with a culture that prizes progress and action while it eschews contemplation and vulnerability. Placed before Jeanne’s discoveries in Isaiah 43, Rose can really only look, listen, point out what she sees, and ask about what comes to mind. To do that, she will have to put aside her need for Jeanne to “go somewhere” with this experience. She may not feel

Spiritual Directors' Responses to Religious Experiences



UNHELPFULLY HURRYING THE DIRECTEE TOWARD ACTION.



HELPFULLY EXPLORING THE DIRECTEE'S EXPERIENCE TO ENABLE HIM TO FATHOM AND SAVOR IT.

very helpful at all. She may feel she's asking only "dumb" questions. She may begin to feel anxious about her performance, and so become self-conscious and unable to engage perseveringly with Jeanne's experience of God.

Contemplative prayer and the spiritual direction that prizes it are the opposites of progress and profit. When certain questions fall into the pool, the contemplative moment vanishes like a fish flashing in the depths: What does this mean? Why is this given to me? What should I do about it? How can I hold onto this? What's next? If contemplation is a long gaze at another, the need to get somewhere refocuses that gaze back onto oneself. Many of us are addicted to self-conscious questions like these and to the feelings of productivity they arouse in us. We become anxious in their absence and afraid in the empty space created by contemplative waiting. Often, when we feel the truth of our helplessness, we react by filling the hole with the "right" questions.

In practice, it can be difficult to deal with the fact that the spiritual director is only ancillary to God's work. It is God who does the revealing in a person's prayer, and only God who knows what is progress for that person. Ananias, the courageous disciple who, in the Acts of the Apostles, helped Saul to see

what was really happening to him, walks off the pages of scripture and history as readily as his directee walks on. Eli, who in Samuel 1:3 helps the young boy Samuel respond to his call from God, disappears from the scene as the direct result of that call. Like them, the spiritual director can help make clear what is transpiring in the relationship with God and what a directee's choices may be, but the director slips out of the picture more quickly than many of us would care to admit to ourselves.

When a director begins to confront his or her own helplessness in supervision, he or she may face deeper issues than appear at first. The director's "working version" of ministry and self-image as a minister may need to be revised; the hard work on which the director has based his or her life may suddenly seem more like compulsion than devotion. The director may notice that much of his or her way of praying has been judged by the results it has yielded rather than by the quality of relationship it has fostered.

These are difficult issues for a minister. He or she may be faced again with unpleasant truths about himself or herself and tempted to presume that dealing in depth with others equals doing the same for oneself. Besides, there are so many who need help, and so little time.

Contemplation has results too, of course, but they come in their own time and fashion. People become more themselves; mutual relationships and commitments develop; beauty stands out; pain and sorrow call for response. No one can say when a director is finally, if ever, doing his or her work contemplatively, but there are signs that indicate growth. Rather than depend on techniques, directors might be more able to consult themselves and the contemplative experiences of their directees in order to respond genuinely. Skills and techniques may be crafted from the director's own personality and held loosely, with a sense of humor. Finally, the director may notice that his or her enthusiasm for exploring what happens in prayer has infected some directees and that he or she is no longer needed in the same way as before. To come to this, a director will ordinarily have to confront some of the issues we have described here and meet with some success in dealing with them.

Concluding the Example. Before she died of cancer, Maura was helped by her director, Francis, to pay attention when God seemed to be saying, "I'm helpless here, too. I will be with you." Francis was surprised that Maura seemed not only quite happy to listen to God this way but also fascinated by what she heard. Maura said to Francis at one time, "If I had kept telling God about my cancer, I would

have been talking only about me. I'd never have found out what he was like. He's very tender, you know." Although her death was difficult and painful, Maura seemed to enjoy an inner peace that may have come from knowing that God so deeply identified with her grieving and dying that even God was helpless, too.

If people are to grow in friendship with God and, as a consequence, in freedom in God's service, they may well need another who will approach their holy ground with them, even enter it as far as that is possible and look about. For not everything that appears holy and solid is actually so. Holy ground needs this kind of testing. It needs the church experience of spiritual direction so that it can be a place on which to stand, a place from which confident holy action can begin.



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Obesity Linked with Diabetes and Other Illnesses

The American Diabetes Association has estimated that six million Americans have diabetes but do not know it. The organization recommends that all adults become familiar with the warning signs of diabetes. These include:

- Overweight and over the age of 40
- Excessive thirst
- Easily tired
- Diabetes history in the family
- Change or blurring in vision
- Frequent urination
- Sores heal slowly

The Association urges persons who develop these symptoms to seek medical assistance without delay.

Forty years ago, 90 percent of diabetes was due to genetic factors and 10 percent resulted from obesity. "Today," says Winnipeg physician W. Gifford-Jones, "90 percent of diabetes is caused by obesity." A new diabetic is diagnosed every 60 seconds in North America. The disease sows the seeds of atherosclerosis,

gangrene, hypertension, degeneration of nerves, and blindness. High blood pressure, in turn, sets the stage for heart disease, strokes, and kidney failure. Obesity is also related to arthritis, sore backs, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, and pregnancy complications. Dr. Gifford-Jones observes that "cancer of the large bowel, gallbladder and female organs is also seen more often in the obese." Dr. Horatio Oria, an obesity surgeon in Houston, recently told delegates at a meeting of The American Society for Bariatric Surgery that the distribution of body fat makes a difference in obesity and its hazards. He said research shows that for people who put on weight around the midsection and "become shaped like an apple," the risks of diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, and sudden death are greater than for those who are "pear shaped with waists smaller than their hips." But, fortunately, cells in the midsection are large and metabolically more active, making it easier to lose weight around the waist by dieting or exercising. Conversely, smaller fat cells in the lower body are less active metabolically, so it takes great effort to get rid of pounds from one's hips.

Rejecting Family-Imposed Roles

Marilyn T. Wussler, S.S.N.D., M.S.

Recently, in conversation with a social-worker colleague, I explored how “don’t feel, don’t trust, don’t talk”—the unverbilized rules in a dysfunctional family—continue to affect my living of community life. She remarked, “Yeah, *don’t* is the big four-letter word, and *should* is the companion six-letter word; with the greater number of letters, it carries even more weight in my life.” This comment created the spark that inspired me to continue my jottings about how dysfunctions in my family of origin provide a script for my life today.

A major task of individuation, of reclaiming the “real self,” is articulating, recognizing, confronting, and shedding the *shoulds* that govern behavior. Each of us has them; learned early in life, they are reinforced over and over (even rewarded when lived out), and covertly, subconsciously active in our adult responses. Depending on the role(s) each of us played in our family of origin, the idiosyncratic *shoulds* will have various nuances—but constriction of the self, loss of the true “me,” and warping of the personality are universal characteristics.

I propose to articulate a few of the *shoulds* that hold each of us in a bondage more total than solitary confinement. Escape from the prison of our personal *shoulds* is impossible until those *shoulds* are recognized and named and confronted; even then, in an insidious, devious, hidden way, they reappear and keep reminding us of the prison

within which the self is detained, kept from growth and expression.

ALL FAMILIES AFFECTED

One wants to believe that one’s family of origin is “perfect for me” because it is the forum that produces the dynamics that allow one to move toward individuation as one confronts the dis-ease in that family. A reality often not recognized is that no family of origin is perfect; correlative to that, every family is to some degree dysfunctional. So long as I deny that reality, I can’t begin to confront my own unhealthy attitudes and behaviors; I keep myself imprisoned.

So much has been written about alcoholism and other substance addictions. Ann Wilson Schaefer and others also write about “process addictions”—addictions to work, to power, to making money. (I grew up in the post-Depression era; in my family I heard messages such as: “If you knew how much this cost, you’d appreciate it more.” “Be careful to check the cost and don’t spend more than. . . .” “No, you can’t go to the show. That squanders money your daddy works so hard for.”) A process addiction can become a riveting dynamic in the family system—a source of control, negativism, and a host of other influences.

It is so easy to deny any dysfunction in a family of origin that is unaffected by substance addiction.

But the definition of a source of dysfunction within a family system is any person, event, or situation that rivets the family's attention, precludes freedom of movement beyond set roles or rules, and requires the commitment (often unconscious but sometimes conscious and explicit) of members of the system to maintain it. A handicapped child, an elderly grandparent, an emotionally ill relative, a parental marriage marred by infidelity, a runaway sibling, a child who does poorly in school—any of these factors and a variety of others, as well as a parent or other family member who abuses substances, can create dysfunction in the family system.

Commitment follows from the unspoken expectation that everyone in the family will do his or her part to keep the system intact and functional. Take the case of a handicapped child. Because the parents' energies (on many levels, including physical and emotional) center on more care for this child, others in the family find themselves covering certain bases, assuming more responsibility, denying their own needs, negating their truth so as not to make things harder. The mother says to the handicapped child's healthy sibling, "Your little sister is so sick and needs so much attention." The translation the healthy child makes is, "I'm healthy, so my needs must not be as important. I don't deserve to take any of mommy's time, because she's so busy and worn out already." Part of the self is disregarded, feelings are suppressed, and the commitment to maintain the system gets more locked into place.

The six-letter word, *should*, plays itself out through the roles in the family system. Roles in a dysfunctional system are many and varied; often participants play more than one, as the need or commitment requires. All participants enable the system to continue and the addiction or dysfunction to stay paramount. Four major roles have been identified as those played by children in a dysfunctional system: hero, clown-mascot, scapegoat, and invisible (or lost) child. (Various authors discuss other roles in family systems. John Bradshaw, for example, in *Healing the Shame That Binds You*, lists over twenty roles that have been noticed operating in dysfunctional relationships.)

HERO

In looking at how *should* operates in the life of the hero, it is important to note that the role is often played by the eldest child but shared by others. The hero is the child who is trying to please, to make things easier, to live up to expectations (verbal and nonverbal); he or she learns self-control and ways of controlling the environment as well. The hero in the dysfunctional family generates a set of scripts out of his or her experiences. If written or spoken, these scripts would sound something like:

1. I should always do my best so I don't worry mommy or daddy.
2. I should carry my load of responsibility, and if someone is slacking off, I should do his or her part too.
3. I should think, feel, and act like an adult.
4. I should keep all the pieces in place and everything running smoothly.
5. I should never get out of line and cause embarrassment.
6. I must not fail, even in small things.

Notice how airtight the *shoulds* are: words like *always* and *never* are part of the script. Variations on the theme might include such words and phrases as *must*, *ought to*, *have to*, and *obliged*, or related negatives (e.g., *must not*, *should not*.) The effect is the same—emotional constriction and minimal freedom to move beyond a set pattern. In community this scripting might be expressed as follows:

1. I'm responsible for the smooth functioning of this local house.
2. If things aren't going well, I need to work harder to build community.
3. It is my responsibility to alleviate any tension or anxiety about sharing.
4. I need to earn more money to take care of our elderly sisters, etc.

CLOWN-MASCOT

We observe other *shoulds* in place in the role of clown-mascot. The clown-mascot is the child who wears the happy, smiley face in spite of tears or fears, the child who carries the burden of keeping joy in the family system, of being sunlight in the darkness, of drying tears and glossing over pain with his or her brightness. The clown-mascot learns to delight and to make light of events that could bruise, and in so doing, often makes light of his or her own needs. *Shoulds* in the life of the clown-mascot sound like:

1. I should never worry about the future; I should always be happy.
2. I shouldn't let anyone know I'm hurting.
3. I should keep the family smiling so everyone thinks we're fine.
4. I'm responsible for parties and good times, and no one will have fun if I don't make them laugh.
5. If anyone is sad in the family, it's my fault.
6. Nothing is so bad that we can't see the bright side.

The role of the clown is to brighten and liven things up. Anything that is ordinary, boring, or dull is an invitation for the clown to enter and turn it into "party time." The clown is the great mask wearer

and role player in the sense that he or she orchestrates the family system's denial of feelings of pain. The clown can become the show-off, the buffoon, the one who compels attention through antics or fun—but he or she loses the truth of self in the process and cannot afford the luxury of feelings of sadness, fear, grief, loss, defeat, despair, need. Clown-mascots in community are folks people love to be around, because there is a lightness, a brightness wherever they are. Operating under the surface of such individuals, though, are obsessive thoughts:

1. If things get too heavy, they'll never lighten up.
2. Don't worry; be happy.
3. I can lift and lighten the burden others bear by smiling in spite of my tears.
4. A party solves all things; if this community isn't talking together, we can at least play together. That way, we'll look like a community.

SCAPEGOAT

The scapegoat role is perhaps the most difficult to fulfill in terms of the consistent pain to the self. For the child in this role, who is taking on the burden of negatives for the family and sacrificing the truth and beauty of self in the process, the *shoulds* are:

1. I should be willing to carry the burdens of others.
2. I should get what's coming to me, because I'm such a bad boy or girl.
3. I shouldn't complain if things don't go right, because I'm not doing what mommy and daddy ask.
4. I must suffer a little more and take on a greater load to keep others safe.
5. I deserve to be punished, because mommy and daddy know what's best.
6. I'm the worst in this family, and I don't deserve attention. I'll take punishment and not let anyone know I'm hurting.

The child caught in this bind somehow has to justify to himself or herself the wisdom of the parents and does so at the radical expense of self-esteem and self-awareness.

INVISIBLE CHILD

The invisible (or lost) child is the one who is the quiet peacekeeper, the one who fades far enough into the background so as not to make waves or upset the balance of power in the family system. *Shoulds* operative in this child's life are:

1. I should be so quiet that no one notices I'm here.
2. I should not be any kind of bother.
3. I should stay quiet so I don't disturb anyone.

Parents do not recognize the roles played by children in the formative stages of those roles

4. I'm not worth paying attention to, so I shouldn't be noticed.
5. I must not take the spotlight from anyone else.
6. I'm afraid of attention, so I should stay in the background; maybe that way I won't get hurt.

The invisible child is the one who surrenders his or her self to the system, becoming a virtual nonentity in his or her own perception—the lowest, last, and least, unworthy of notice. As an adult, continuing to be “lost” or “invisible” in community, with a self fading more and more into oblivion, this person continues with such inner messages as:

1. I don't want to cause any trouble, so I won't speak up.
2. If I'm quiet, maybe no one will notice me.
3. I have a right not to share or connect; people around me know better what serves all of us.
4. I'm ashamed of my thoughts and feelings; they prove that I'm the odd one.

ROLES MUST BE CONFRONTED

Parents do not recognize the roles played by children in the formative stages of those roles. It is often necessary to make them explicit or to exaggerate them to demonstrate how devastatingly they affect the lives of children. And these roles continue to operate in the lives of adults. For instance, the community scapegoat is the one who tells himself or herself:

1. I'm not OK and never have been OK; I'm not valuable in this community.
2. I can take anything people dish out; it's what I've learned to do best.
3. I've never succeeded at ministry and never will. I'm a burden to this community.

4. Go ahead; hit me while I'm down. I deserve what I get.

In specifying the internal messages inherent in each role, I have deliberately caricatured, exaggerated, or expanded them. It is easy to avoid recognizing my own dysfunctional roles and scripts until I express them in an exaggerated fashion to bypass the denial defense. Unless deliberately confronted, roles that begin in childhood can continue into adulthood. Each of the role players described learns not to trust the self, learns to keep the family secret(s) or preserve the family system (dysfunctional as it may be), learns not to validate or express his or her feelings. The self gradually diminishes as the person lives out the role he or she has adopted in the family of origin. Until that role is named, owned, and confronted, the self can bring to community only the prescribed role.

Test the reality of lived community experience. The lists of *shoulds* are not comprehensive, only representative. What is the role or combination of roles you live in community (whether in formation, in professed life, or even in retirement)? What roles do others in your community "family system" play? How do the roles interact, and at what expense to your true self?

The language of dysfunctional family systems is the language of sin and grace revisited. Sin darkens the intellect, weakens the will. What so darkens my

perception of myself as the role I am scripted to play? What so weakens my will to claim, stand up for, advocate for my precious self as the *shoulds* that tyrannize my life?

Hope lies in naming and confronting roles. The self can be refound and refounded on the more healthy ground of "I choose," "I need," "I want," "I feel."

RECOMMENDED READING

- Black, C. *Repeat After Me*. Denver, Colorado: Medical Administration Company, 1985.
Bradshaw, J. *Healing the Shame That Binds You*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Community, 1988.
Presnall, L. *The Search for Serenity: And How to Achieve It*. Salt Lake City: Utah Alcoholism Foundation, 1959.
Schaef, A. *When Society Becomes an Addict*. New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1987.



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Parents Can Improve Television for Children

School psychologist Dr. Bennett Z. Hirsch, who has been doing research for three years at the Yale Family Television Research and Counseling Center, recently reported the results of his findings regarding children's television viewing habits. He and his colleagues studied the effects of television on 66 kindergarteners and first-graders by going into their homes and observing them directly. There were two major findings, according to Dr. Hirsch. The first was that the amount of time parents spent talking with their children about what they were viewing made a significant difference in the children's learning. As a result, he recommends to parents, "Talk to your child about what they're watching. Watch with the child and discuss it as you're watching it, before and after. Talk about what they see, raise questions, get it so they're really processing the information."

The second major finding, says Dr. Hirsch, is that "putting limits on the amount of TV watching made a major difference in what the kids get out of television, and it almost didn't matter. . . whether [it was] a 30-minute-a-day or 2-hour-a-day limit." He explains, "Just

having that limit in place sends a message to the child that it's not just a passive, nonstop activity. It's something you think about and plan."

Dr. Hirsch found that children who watch a large amount of television programming are inclined to view the world as frightening, since violence occurs on TV far more frequently than it does in real life. The study also showed that children who watch television less than three hours a day are less aggressive than those who spend more hours in front of the screen. It is not yet clear whether television attracts children who are more aggressive or whether the viewing of so much violence contributes to the development of aggression among young watchers.

Lamenting television's lack of good educational programs for children, Dr. Hirsch concludes, "I think until parents stand up and say we need something *done*, until we're willing to take a stand and join organizations, until we're willing to write our legislators and really get on top of this, as long as we remain tacit about what's on the air for our kids, we'll continue to see the most minimal programming."

BOOK REVIEW

The Mystery of My Story: Autobiographical Writing for Personal and Spiritual Development, by Paula Farrell Sullivan. New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1991. 110 pp. \$5.95 (paperback).

Paula Farrell Sullivan has a master's degree in rhetoric and writing from the University of Tulsa and experience in journalism, and she teaches composition and creative writing at Tulsa Junior College. She has also developed a three-day "The Mystery of My Story" workshop, which she has presented widely and effectively. From this rich background she has distilled a constructive and functional volume.

Reflective writing and autobiography have a long and distinguished history among Christians. Generations of readers have been moved to the quick by Augustine's cry "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you" in the opening paragraphs of his *Confessions*. Teresa of Avila, Dorothy Day (*The Long Loneliness*—what a poignant title), Thomas Merton—a never-ending list, it seems, of our forebears and colleagues who seek to understand God's dealings with them and to share their discoveries with us.

In recent years the journaling workshops of Ira Progoff have proven popular and very helpful to many people, both in secular areas and in the presentations made at many retreat houses or spiritual centers (Sullivan refers to these workshops in passing but does not cite Progoff in the notes or bibliography).

Do not be frightened off by my name-dropping in the earlier paragraphs. This book is directed at ordinary people and can be used for pleasure and

enrichment without the necessity of either special training or high literary ability. It is filled with practical suggestions on how to prepare, how to start, how to proceed, how to get started again when you're stuck, and how to savor, use, or share your writing. The author has made a good survey of "strategies for retrieving information stored in our memories. . . list, cluster, mind-map, dialogue, or ask the journalist's questions." She has filled out her directions with clear and encouraging examples of how people she has worked with have used the tools to enhance their appreciation and enjoyment of life.

In the geriatric psychiatry portion of my work, I share the enthusiasm of many geriatricians for the usefulness of the "life review." This, whether done orally, in writing, or on audiotape or videotape, can be very helpful to people in assisting them to rise beyond the constrictions of present circumstances, to gain a wider perspective, and to realize a deeper and richer understanding of their lives.

Sullivan's title, "The Mystery of My Story," indicates her goal: to facilitate an understanding of the workings of divine grace, of our part in God's mystery, and of the mystery's part in our life.

I recently saw the Washington (D.C.) Arena Stage production of *Our Town*. Each time I see Thornton Wilder's play (now fifty years old) I am moved profoundly by its message—the tragedy that we are so insensitive to the beauty and wonder of our daily lives that we thoughtlessly squander such riches. The processes advocated by Sullivan—retrieving our experiences, our memories; looking at them again; seeing them anew in the context of time and eternity—will help us to avoid such wasteful mistakes and intensify our appreciation.

It is a useful book, not only for older people or for those who have recently gone through a major life event but for any thoughtful person. Used as directed, it will indeed be "a gift that keeps on giving."

—Jon J. O'Brien, S.J., D.O.

Notices

Occasionally the editors of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT receive requests to publish advertising material or to announce upcoming events. Despite the increased costs of publishing and mailing the journal, we have tried to avoid raising the price of subscriptions while at the same time maintaining our policy of not accepting commercial advertising. It is our hope that satisfied readers will tell their friends about HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and that our number of subscribers will increase as a result, thus covering our additional costs.

When we have a little space, however, we will be happy to print our readers' requests. For example, Father Anthony Russo, C.S.S.R., the chairman of the Secretariat for Community Life for the Redemptorists' Baltimore Province, is currently searching for questionnaires, interview forms, surveys, or other measuring instruments designed to gather data on the state of religious community life. If you know of such material, please notify Father Russo at St. Boniface Rectory, 174 W. Diamond St., Philadelphia, PA 19122 (phone: 215-739-6376).

We also want to draw your attention to the fact that an article by Father Dominic Maruca, S.J., "Spiritual Direction in a Cross-Cultural Perspective," which appeared in the Spring 1991 issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, is to be included in the book *Common Journey, Different Paths*, soon to be published by Orbis Books. Susan Rakoczy, I.H.M., is editor of the volume.

Center's List Needs Updating

For several years the Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development has maintained a list of professional therapists and clinical facilities found helpful by religious women and men, along with diocesan priests, who have received their competent care. We use this list to respond to the phone calls and letters we receive from clergy and religious seeking help for themselves or other persons who are experiencing problems related to excessive stress, chemical dependency, sexuality, depression, codependency, burnout, and the like. We have welcomed the opportunity to make the names of these resources available to anyone asking for one or several local names from our list. We never, of course, reveal the identity of the person who has written to us in endorsement of the therapist, counselor, hospital, or clinic he or she found beneficial.

Once each year we have repeated in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT a request for contributions to this list. At the present time we are especially anxious to update it with entries from all fifty American states and from countries all over the world. We are receiving requests for assistance more often than ever before, and there are still a number of cities and towns, even in heavily populated areas, for which we lack names and are unable to provide referrals. Consequently, we are now asking our readers to assist us, especially if counseling or therapy has been experienced and found helpful in the past five years, to make our list more complete and up to date. Please take a few minutes to complete the six brief statements that follow; then send this page to the address given below.

1. I (or someone in my community) was a patient / counselee of _____ (name of therapist, hospital, clinic, etc.).

2. The general nature of the condition for which treatment was sought was _____ (depression, alcoholism, obesity, sexual problem, burnout, etc.).
3. The provider of helpful treatment was _____ (a clinical psychologist, nurse clinical specialist, psychiatrist, drug rehabilitation center, etc.).
4. The name of the staff member who helped me (him / her) most is _____ (if care was obtained at a clinic or hospital, etc.).
5. My comments on the quality of care received are as follows: _____
6. The address and phone number of the person / center I am recommending are _____ and _____.

The chance for others to regain their sense of well-being and their ability to function with renewed effectiveness and happiness may depend on what you do right now in reply to this request. Please help us to help them.

Gratefully yours,

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